Eugene Wright.

A

STAR BOOK

THE GREAT HORN SPOON

BY

EUGENE WRIGHT

Illustrated by

BOB FINK

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To
MY FATHER

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THE GREAT HORN SPOON

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Chapter One

ESCAPE

The odors of cinnamon and cloves from Ceylon drifted from a musty doorway; farther on, the strong aroma of Brazilian coffees filled my nostrils. The tumbling reckless life and the rich smells of the water-front mingled with the clank and thunder of trucks and drays in one strenuous cheer of approval of my search for a ship that would carry me away.

I crossed one side-street, leaped across another. The smelly clothes of the Jewish wholesalers brushed my shoulders and the rollicking bodies of negroes, horse-playing with their work, lurched about me like trees in a flood. Along these streets, I knew, were shipping bureaus—little one-room affairs in the second stories of warehouses with blackboards set out in front. Once I had seen listed an ad for a pearl-diver; and several times I had noticed seamen's jobs on coastwise schooners. I had never been to sea as a sailor, but I had wanted to travel that way since childhood and felt that I could do anything aboard a ship. Ah, if I could only find an ordinary seaman's job on an India-bound cargo steamer!

I already had a seaman's passport. One Saturday when I thought that I could stand college no longer, I had slipped down to the Battery and filled one out. And now the time had come to go. I had left college, birds were flying north, ships were sailing east and the whole wide

world was calling me to come and see. I wanted to go to India . . . Borneo . . . Persia . . . to all the lands whose names I knew so well, to all the seas that washed their shores. I had to get away immediately, for I felt that if I stayed in New York another day I would turn into stone.

At Coentie's slip I stopped beneath a sign that announced Joe Harris' shipping bureau. There was nothing on the blackboard outside, but I clumped up the rickety wooden stairs and went in. A drunken sailor was slouched down on a bench, and behind a low desk was a fat person dressed like a circus manager. He had three chins and he clamped a dead cigar in his lower jaw with two gold teeth.

"Anythin' doin' now in sail?" I asked.

He rolled one leg over the other, and stuck his thumbs into his vest pockets. "Naw," he replied, "there ain't *nothin'* doin' now. The strike's on."

"The strike!" I cried.

"Sure," he replied, rolling the cigar toward the east in a succulent gulp, "the seamen's strike. Ain't you heard about it?"

"Just come in this mornin'," I explained, and I strolled out in a leisurely fashion as if to resign myself to fate and wait out the strike with the rest.

But once in the street I hurried over to the Seamen's Institute and found my way to the shipping office down in the basement. A motley crowd, up all night it seemed, lounged about on benches and chairs, reading newspapers and smoking. There were two ships listed on the blackboard, but they apparently were too unattractive to tempt the most desperate men present, for no one paid any attention to them.

I stood around a moment to get my bearings, and then pushed through the crowd and went into the office behind the wire grating. I was considerably composed by this time, and stood before the clerk with the uneasy air typical of a sailor ashore before authority.

"Any ships goin' to the Far East?" I asked.

He pushed back his green eye-shade and peered at me quizzically. "You won't find them here," he said; and then, as if he had read my mind, added. "You'll find them over in the Sea Service Bureau. Know where it is?"

He wrote the address on a slip of paper. I took it, thanked him awkwardly and went out.

I was amazed, when I reached the street, to realize that I had actually asked for a ship to the Far East. I wanted to go there badly enough, no doubt of that; but it seemed so impossible. Every seaman, I thought, must want to go there, and such jobs would be at a premium, to be had only by the cream of the seafaring world. I hoped for it, yes; but with shipping slack and the strike on I was willing to go almost anywhere for the present—Rio, Buenos Aires, Spain; for, once I got out of New York, I could always get to the Far East. I knew I could get there. The thing at present was to get away, to make the break and leave the United States at all costs, no matter where. I looked upon India and Singapore as visions, and hurried toward my address, prepared to go even to Europe.

The Sea Service Bureau was located in the second floor of a yellow brick building at the corner of Greenwich and Carlyle Streets. The elevated trains rumbled past its front windows; groups of seamen, bronzed from their last cruise, and hatless and coatless from their first

nights ashore, stood about in groups, absorbing the spring sun and discussing the trivialities of the moment. I kicked my way through a scattering of dirty newspapers and cigarette packages and climbed up the iron stairs to the second floor. Through a haze of tobacco smoke I read on the blackboard: *"S. S. Wellington.* 2 O. S. Stand by."

"O. S." I understood to mean "ordinary seamen," but the words "stand by" puzzled me. Evidently it was a taboo of some sort, for no one showed the slightest interest in it. But I was eager to know what it meant, for unless it were something very depressing I knew that I would take it. I feared to ask the clerk. That would have been as much as telling him I had never been to sea, but wanted a job anyway; so I put the question in a low voice to the man nearest me. He was a well-fed Swede with a cigarette, long gone out, clinging to his lower lip.

"Huh?" he asked, lifting one eyebrow.

"I say, what does 'stand by' mean?"

He lowered the brow, and a narrow glint of eye surveyed me with as much contempt, I thought, as a Northlander's eye could hold.

"Yu work around the ship while she's in dock . . . *drydock*," he grunted. The cigarette dropped unheeded to the floor, and his eye closed. I knew what "stand by" meant, and was about to hurry out to the next shipping agency when a clerk came out of the office and wrote in large letters on the blackboard: *"S. S. Hyacinth.* 2 A. B.'S" and at the same instant some one said to me: "Is that a Ferman or an Istria Line boat?"

I glanced around to look into a red face pierced by two of the clearest and bluest eyes I had ever seen. "Don't know," I replied. "I'd like to know myself."

Without another word he walked up to the clerk, and asked; a thing that astonished me, for I thought real seamen knew, and were expected to know, every ship and line in the world. I would never have dared to do it myself.

In a moment he came back. "She's an Istria Line boat," he said, "bound for the Far East."

Far East! I almost leaped toward the office. "Hey!" he murmured, with a lift of his head; but I kept on going, opened the door and went in. The shipping master glanced up casually. "That *Hyacinth* . . . Far East boat . . ." I said, trying to keep my voice as bored as possible. I had not realized what the writing on the blackboard meant; all I knew was that the *Hyacinth* went to the Orient and that I must go with her.

"A. B.?" he asked, putting his pencil to a pad of paper.

I nodded, wondering what an A. B. was.

"Got your ticket?"

Ticket! Was the man trying to pull my leg? What on earth was a ticket? But his face was expressionless, and he awaited my reply. I made a gesture, and stroked my nose. "Lost it," I replied carelessly.

"Well," he said, filling out the blank with my name and rating, "we've got to see the ticket. They make trouble for us if we don't. Better go down and get another one. Well, here, may as well take your physical exam now and have it over with. Then you can bring your ticket back afterward."

Utterly bewildered by all he said, I nodded, took the slip of paper and went into the medical room. A few moments later I was in the crowded lobby again. The seaman who had said the words "Far East" was stand-

ing full in the center of the room looking at me. "Well, did you get it?" he grinned.

"Sure. But say," I whispered, "what's a ticket? . . . Fellow in there said I had to get a ticket!"

"Ticket?" A puzzled expression wrinkled his face, but his eyes sparkled with amusement. "Oh, I guess he means an A. B. ticket. Haven't you got one?"

By some common impulse we moved apart from the crowd where we could talk unheard. "No," I replied, "and what's an A. B.?"

He suppressed a grin. "An A. B.," he said gravely, "is an able-bodied seaman, and an A. B. ticket is a credential to prove that the seaman has served on the sea for three years, and has the experience to take an A. B. job. Been to sea before?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "Once or twice in schooners," I said indifferently.

Immediately he brightened up. "Schooners! Well, you can get an A. B. ticket! These fellows that go to sea to-day as A. B.'s don't know anything about ships. Sure, get an A. B. ticket, and then you'll always find a ship. Costs one dollar, but you'll find it the best investment you ever made. Know where to go?"

I shook my head.

"It's in the Barge Office. Know where that is?"

I shook my head again, and his face wrinkled into a huge grin.

"Well,"—he glanced up at the blackboard, and then at the clock,—"you doing anything now?"

Doing anything! "Sure," I replied emphatically, "I'm going down to the Barge Office!"

"Well, that's what I wanted to know. I'll show you where it is."

Together we walked down to the Battery, he with a choppy sea gait and I with a stride that would have lengthened into a run had he not halted me. "Don't let on a thing, now," he warned as we reached the building. "Don't say you've never been on a merchant ship before . . . just give 'em a line, and you'll get it."

With a seaman's passport as my only credential, I stood outside the low wooden railing that separated me from the office of the Barge captain. He was a tall fellow with a steely gray eye, and a slight imperial that struggled to cover his pointed chin. His hair was brushed back with a Whistlerian gesture, and he wore pince-nez glasses; but the effect was completely shattered by a few sprouts of long hair on his Adam's apple. At one corner of the room, peering slyly over a pair of enormous glasses, was a contemplative cherub face, pink and rosy as a girl's. A sign over the desk proclaimed this man a notary public.

"Ah, ticket?" snapped the captain. "Passport, birth certificate and discharges!" He held out his hand to receive them, and, after some fumbling, I produced a worn folded paper, my seaman's passport. He settled back in his swivel chair and adjusted his glasses. "Hm! No discharges? No birth certificate?"

"Captain," I began in a sad voice, "all my discharges and my birth certificate were stolen from me together with my A. B. ticket, eighty dollars in cash, some photographs of my father and mother and other personal possessions on my last voyage."

He pursed his lips, removed the pince-nez, and scratched the bridge of his nose with a sensitive index finger. "This matter of giving A. B. tickets to men without the proper credentials," said he, "is a very serious

one. How do I know that you are a qualified seaman? How do I know but that you will reflect discredit upon the American Merchant Marine by your incompetence? I have nothing here that will allow me to think otherwise."

He flipped my seaman's passport on the desk and folded his hands.

"Captain," said I, looking earnestly into his face, "it is true, as you say, that I have no longer any proofs of my ability. Some one else is now profiting by them. To tell you the entire truth, I am going back to the sea." I paused for effect. "For four years, in my youth, I followed the sea because I loved it. I served in old clipper ships, and in the lumber schooners of the West Coast. Two years ago"—and I spoke with regret—"I left the sea determined never to look at it again; but now, the call is too great; I have a good job ashore, I have dear friends and a good family, but I am leaving it all for the sea.

"I mean, if I am able to secure another A. B. ticket, to start in where I left off, and to work up to an officer's position. From now on, the sea is once again to be my profession and my joy. Can you deny me this opportunity?" I made my jaw as square as possible, and looked him full in the eyes.

"Hm!" he said. "This seaman's passport says you are twenty years of age. If you left the sea two years ago you were eighteen years old. Correct? Well, according to the navigation rules a man must be at least nineteen years of age to possess a certificate of able seamanship. That still leaves you another year of service as an apprentice before you are eligible for an A. B. ticket."

"You're wrong!" I cried. He jumped out of his chair. "That passport says twenty *or thereabouts*. I was actually twenty-one years of age when that was filled out!"

"Here, in black and white, it says twenty!" bellowed the captain.

"—or thereabouts!" I echoed triumphantly. "I am now twenty-two!"

"It says twenty," he repeated, "and who are you to tell me what's what, you young whippersnapper, you blankety blank blank! Try to come up here and tell *me* . . ."

Thus we argued back and forth, he holding the whip hand, and I trying to mollify him enough to overstep his arguments. He decided, at length, that I would have to take an examination before the Naval Reserve Board; I poured all my hopes into a last desperate burst of eloquence.

"Captain," I pleaded, "my ship sails to-morrow. I already have the job. I have seen the mate, and made all arrangements to sign articles for the voyage. I served my apprenticeship when the sea was a rough road; and now must I, at my age and with my experience, sacrifice three years of my life to get a certificate that I earned years ago? Your experience and keen insight can surely see that I am a qualified seaman, one like yourself, trained according to the methods of the old school. I shall get in touch with the captains I have sailed with . . . Cowlett . . . Haxleton . . . Granger—I sailed with him for six months. I shall give you proof that I was honorably discharged from their services. My ship sails to-morrow; perhaps . . ."

My voice trailed off in some other desperate phrase, and ended in a gasp, as I saw him draw an A. B. blank

from his drawer and lay it diagonally before him. He filled it in carefully, and then laid it on the corner of his desk. "Register the ships you have sailed in, their tonnages and captains, with the notary," he said, "and I will issue you a certificate."

It seems proper here in print to say that I made an obeisance, bowed or expressed my joy to him in some other way. But I merely gave the slightest nod of recognition and turned away as if I had got my rights only after a very unfair battle.

The notary peered over his spectacles at the captain, drew back his shirt-sleeves and picked up a sheet of paper. He was very grave, and something in his innocent eyes and pink face made me think of a very benevolent old snail retreating into his shell. My name and address were entered. Then came the ships. He poised his pen, and glanced up at me with a roll of eyes that lifted his fair eyebrows.

"Catamont," I said in a low voice.

"Tonnage?"

"Eighteen thousand."

"Captain?"

"Captain? Ah, Captain Standerson."

He blotted the lines and shifted the paper up a bit. The pen poised again, the great innocent eyes rolled upward.

"Tendril," I whispered. "T-e-n-d-r-i-l."

"Tonnage?"

I hesitated. Should it be more or less than the last one? Twenty-five thousand would be a good-sized boat . . . or would it be a small one? "Thirty thousand," I said. He blinked; one large eye rolled above an eye-glass and winked at me slyly. Then he made a

false motion with his pen, and wrote down nine thousand five hundred. I could have embraced him on the spot.

After he had filled out the remainder of the sheet with ships and captains and tonnages from his own memory he read the oath of verity; and before I could raise my hand to testify to the truth of those statements his rubber stamp came down with a professional thud below my signature. I paid my one dollar, impressed the notary with all the gratitude that I could squeeze into a firm handclasp, and almost snatching the A. B. ticket from the captain's desk hurried out of the office. I was an able-bodied seaman; I had sailed the high seas for three years . . . over three years!

At quarter of twelve I came out of the Sea Service Bureau with a slip of paper that assured me of a job on the *S. S. Hyacinth.* In less than three hours I had decided to go away, and made all arrangements to do so; not for a day or a week, but for months, years! There remained nothing to do but get my clothes and go aboard.

But where, I wondered, was she going? To the Far East, yes, but that was vague. As long as I was to be aboard her for several months I felt I would like to know definitely, so I went into a cigar store and called up the ship's office.

"Say," I cried, "do you have a ship leaving for the Far East within a few days?"

"The *Hyacinth,*" muttered a voice at the other end of the wire, "leaves the day after to-morrow. The next ship, the . . ."

"Hold on!" I interrupted. "Where is the *Hyacinth* going in the Far East?"

The voice delayed, muttering vaguely, and my own heart thumped so that I thought the telephone booth

would fall apart. A man was lighting a cigarette at the counter outside, and the clerk was ringing up change. Why didn't he answer? Why . . .

"The *Hyacinth?*" the voice asked again.

"Yes, the *Hyacinth!*" I cracked.

"Why the *Hyacinth* is going to India. Did you want . . ."

But I waited to hear no more. I slammed down the receiver and dashed into the street, with all the world inside me. I wanted to shriek, to yell, to tear down the elevated posts, kick through buildings, to grasp the city of New York to my chest in one great sweep and fling it to the winds. The city was a blur, and I could neither see nor act with reason. I had to run, I had to keep on moving; for I was going to India. . . . I was going to India!

Chapter Two

ROMANCE

The next morning, with a sea bag over my shoulder, I paused beside a huge pier that groaned and vibrated with the rumbling of trucks and heavy cargoes. The *Hyacinth* lay before me, moored to the pier by thick ropes, and passively submitting herself to be loaded. She was a stark denuded hulk of steel, unadorned by anything that might have added grace to her lines; but I thought that I had never before seen such a glorious ship. Her bulwarks were as strong as the neck cords of a Tartar, and she swept aft to a bulging waist that suggested a steadying influence to her headstrong bow. She was all ship, thought I; not one of your floating palaces rigged up to provide all the luxury that tourists lack ashore, but a ship with a substantial purpose in the world. She was of the stuff that wrote lines in the world's epic of adventure.

I showed my pass to the watchman at the pier entrance and started down the noisy vault that held her cargoes. Crates and boxes of every description were piled about me, some marked Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon. Perspiring men trundled bales and heavy sacks to the pier's edge on little hand trucks; and at intervals, through open spaces, I could see the splotched hull of the *Hyacinth*. A winch rumbled on her decks, and a net sling filled with goods was swept from the pier. Another rumble, and an immense packing box crashed against her plates and rose out of sight. As I walked up the gang-

plank I trembled with delight, for in another moment my adventure would commence.

In the midst of all the confusion on deck I discovered a little old man leaning against a boom support with an officer's cap on the back of his head. I suspected that he was the mate, but I was not sure; so I handed him my slip without addressing him. He sized me up in a quick glance and crammed the slip in his pocket. "Fo'castle's aft," he said. "Put your gear away and then help these men with the stores."

I had thought that I would pass a mate's inspection, for I had come over in old clothes. My face was unshaved and a bit dirty. I wore no coat, and my old flannel shirt was greasy and stained. One sleeve reached to my elbow; the other had been torn off at the shoulder. My khaki pants were out at the knees, and my shoes looked as if a hungry dog had been at them. I strolled aft leisurely, anxious to make a good impression. A companionway led below. I descended, and found myself in a room lined with steel bunks; a room that was dark and empty, and had a musty odor.

Suddenly a pasty-faced youth in a long sweater appeared with a pail and mop.

"A. B.?" he asked.

I nodded.

"There's no one in them bunks," he said, pointing to a series of four at my left. I threw my sea bag upon the nearest of them, sat down upon a box and began to roll a cigarette. I wanted to organize myself for the work to be done above, for I knew I would be under the eyes of the mate and bo'sun, both of whom looked to be old Norwegian seamen. But I was confident that I could do the work of an A. B. to the satisfaction of any mate, and

without any loss of pride to myself. I had been a sailor mentally for so many years that it seemed, as I had told the Barge captain, just like getting back to an old job that I had left years ago. I felt an instinct for the work, and I loved it, so what did it matter if I had never stood at the wheel of a merchant ship before? I flipped the brown paper cigarette into a corner and walked on deck. I felt like an able-bodied seaman, and I knew I could prove it to any one's satisfaction.

There was wireless to fix. I climbed up the mainmast, went hand over hand up to the truck, and began to heave lines as I had thrown lariats a thousand times in the West. Below me, every movable and dynamic force in the world, it seemed, was ministering to the *Hyacinth*. All the roads led to her hold, all America had something to offer her. Electric engines, barges and tugs were at her sides beneath me. The glistening backs of laughing and swearing longshoremen were eddying in upon her, pushing, stuffing, packing the products of a thousand factories into her hold. Singing Italians with red bandannas around their necks heaved at the ropes, and a great fat Neapolitan sat beneath a cardboard sunshade, swelling himself up like a toad to give orders that would carry above the rumble and racket that went on below. I, perched in the topmasts, was a part of all this motion! I belonged to the scarred hulk that lay beneath me, bound and helpless, like some great sea animal being fussed over by crazy scientists!

On deck the bo'sun pointed to some rope strewn over a hatch and said, "Make that up over the rail."

I picked up a loose end, and in lariat fashion began to throw out the kinks. How, I wondered, was a rope "made up over the rail"? I turned around, playing for

time, to see if other seamen were "making up ropes," but there were none. Then I looked over the railings. On the opposite side was a rope coiled over the chain-rail; and a few moments later my own was made up in the same fashion.

By watching closely, by being on the alert every moment, I surmounted a score of such difficulties. When something new came up, some order that I did not understand, I always let my partner lay his hand to it first. I was only a split second behind him, but that time was sufficient to show me what was to be done.

At noon, the winches hissed to a noisy halt. From all the openings in the ship men came up to fill their stomachs. Men blackened with grease, and with clothes dripping oil, came out of the engine room; seamen covered with rust and paint came out of holes in the deck. From fore and aft, from the waist of the ship, from above and below they appeared like the denizens of a disturbed anthill. I never realized before the vast number of men that were working inside of her. They crowded into the mess room, and in an atmosphere of steamy food and perspiring bodies, we had lunch.

"Send over the grease!" A huge plate of butter came sliding past me. Hunks of bread were slapped down and covered with the bright golden substance. Buckets of boiled potatoes, kettles of meat, livid pens of sliced beets were slung on the table and grabbed for.

Scowls and grumbles. A Norwegian pushed back his plate and left the table. Several more pawed over the food with their knives, looking into it suspiciously. They snorted, swore viciously, got up and left; they were dissatisfied with the food, and vowed they would quit the ship.

Me quit the ship because of food? I ate like a hungry dog. I grabbed and yelled and ate with my knife and fingers like any of the black gang. And when I had finished I pushed back my plate, wiped my sleeve across my mouth and staggered on deck. Ah, but life was good! My stomach was full, my arms and back ached and my brain whirled about like a top. I was exuberantly happy.

We worked desperately that afternoon. The *Hyacinth* sailed upon the morrow, and the urge to get away to sea drove even the laziest of us to superhuman efforts. Coils of rope, oakum and tar, marlinspikes, canvas and twine—ship's stores with a history came on by the ton. With laughter and happy curses we hauled them up from the dock by hand, for the winches had all they could do to clear the pier of the tons of cargo that remained. Even the officers, cooks and steward came down to lend a hand; every one seemed eager to load the *Hyacinth* for sea, and the realization that I, in bare shoulders and blue dungarees, was actually a part of this picturesque work, drove the soreness from my muscles, raised me to peaks of muscular exertion that swelled my chest with pride. With the smell of oakum in my nostrils, I heaved pots of lead to my back and carried them to the forepeak. It was a privilege to crunch coils of rope between my hands; an exquisite delight to lower a net-sling of canvas and tar into the bo'sun's locker. Yet at the end of the day I swayed back to the net-sling like a slack rope. It seemed impossible that I could ever bend over again and actually straighten up; ridiculous to expect my body to carry another three-hundred-fifty-pound sack of sugar to the grinning Filipino cooks.

At five o'clock only a bit more loading remained to be done; and that would be done the first thing in the morn-

ing before we sailed. I went below to bathe and to change my dripping clothes. As I came out of the washroom whom should I see but Jerry Joyce, the seaman I had met in the Sea Service Bureau, standing in the companionway. At that moment, there was no one in the world I wanted to see more than Jerry Joyce. He gave no indication of having seen me, and I, judging it was best to follow his lead, went on with my dressing. It was only on deck, where we were away from the crew, that he spoke.

"Well, how is everything going?" he asked. "Have you signed on?"

"Signed on at noon," I replied, "but there are some things I'd like to ask you about."

"I know. You eating supper here?"

I replied that I was not. Down the gangplank we went, and into the street. At a little Third Avenue barroom, in sight of the *Hyacinth's* masthead, we ordered beef stews and schooners of beer.

Suddenly he said: "You've been reading adventure stories, haven't you?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Well," he went on, looking straight at me, "you're not going to find the sea like you think it is. I came down here with the idea of knocking this idea of going to sea out of your head, but since you've signed on there's nothing to do about it now.

"But," he said firmly, "don't make another trip! And come back with the ship! When I was your age I ran away from my home in Australia to see the world. Just like you, I thought I'd make one or two trips and then come back and settle down. That was twenty-five years ago; and look at me now! Just look at me! A bum!

Nothing but a bum, just like all the rest of the scum you saw standing in the Sea Service Bureau yesterday morning! No, sonny, don't keep it up! It's no good! It's no good, I tell you!"

I ate my meal in silence, but Jerry left his food untasted before him. There was nothing I could say, nothing I could do. I hungered for the sea.

"Well," he said at length, "no use in my talking like that now. Make the trip . . . get it out of your system. Then come back and settle down. Ever steered before?"

I shook my head.

"Know the bells?"

I shook my head again. He grinned, and then picked up his knife. "You're going to take the wheel, you know," he said. "And you'll have to stand watch and answer bells and throw the lead and all that. Know anything about it?"

"Not a thing," I replied.

"Well, it's easy," he continued. "You can learn it all in ten minutes, though some of 'em never learn it." He tapped the knife-blade against his glass. "That's half past twelve, half past four or half past eight. Now, for every half-hour you add a stroke to that one." He tapped the glass twice, paused an instant, and tapped again.

For three hours we sat within sight of the *Hyacinth's* masthead, and in that time I learned ship's bells, watch signals and calls, the etiquette of the wheel-house, the names of parts of the ship and the locations of gear. Together, we racked our brains for every question I should know or ask. When he finally arose to leave I felt qualified to stand an examination by the Naval Reserve.

"One last thing," he said, fixing me with his blue eyes:

"Promise me that you'll come back with the ship."

Come back with the *Hyacinth?* Come back after I had actually made my escape from New York? Come back after I had reached the heart of the Orient and could go to Borneo, Java, Persia—anywhere that I had ever dreamed of going? It was too much to ask. I could not promise. Once I had reached Calcutta, I told him, I meant to leave the ship and go on for ever.

I thought he would ask me again, but he did not. As we reached the door his eyes were moist. "Go to it, sonny," he said. We shook hands quickly, and he disappeared around a corner with his choppy, deep-sea gait. Jerry Joyce, with the heart of a poet, feared that he had sent me to chasing the same mysterious will-o'-the-wisp that had made him a slave to the sea. Yet he was the only man except my father who thoroughly understood *why* I was going away, and who had the wisdom to help me. I could have kissed his hand and held up my head with pride.

The next day at noon the tugs were alongside, the blue peter was at our masthead, and the hatches were battened down ready for sea. But there was no excitement. The crew lolled half asleep on the after-bitts, smoking and repenting past sins. On the deck were three longshoremen, waiting patiently for the word to cast off the lines. I stood against the taffrail, tense with excitement. Great heavens, we were going to India! Why didn't some one shout! Why didn't those sleepy animals get up and cheer! The whistle blew, and the pilot came up the gangway; but still there was no movement. I walked swiftly amidships to work off steam, hurried back to my post. I wanted to yell, to cheer, to smack my fists

against the bulkheads and cry, "We are going to India!" And at that moment the bo'sun called:

"Wright, you and Freddie on the twelve to four watch! Make it lively now!"

My watchmate, a young Swede with sloping shoulders and a fat face, wrinkled like an old woman's, came slouching toward me.

"You want first wheel?" he grunted.

"Sure, I'll take it," I replied, and climbed up to the wheel-house. It was to be my first wheel . . . the first in my life . . . and I was to guide the *Hyacinth* out of New York harbor on my voyage to India!

A tug screeched below me. A hoarse voice shouted, the winches rumbled and I heard the splash of a hawser striking the water.

"Good-by! Fair voyage, Captain!" called a feminine voice.

The captain leaned over the bridge and waved.

"Bring back a monkey," she screamed.

He waved again, twisted his cigar to a fresh tooth, and the pilot pulled the whistle.

"Steady!" he said.

"Steady!" I whispered, clutching the wheel firmly.

The ship vibrated, whistled again, and the tugs drew us from the wharf and out into the East River. My heart leaped into my chest and stayed there. Here was I guiding a great ship,—a thing torn from the earth,—it seemed, across the horizon.

"Little to starboard," droned the pilot.

"Little to starboard," I repeated huskily. I hesitated an instant and then turned the wheel slowly to the right. The mate leaped forward like a cougar, gripped the wheel and swung it viciously to the left.

"Midships," droned the pilot.

I repeated the command and brought the wheel around half a turn. The wide panorama of the world's shipping stretched before me on the East River. The flags of a thousand nations, it seemed, blazed and flared in my eyes.

The captain turned quickly from the bridge and came toward me. "The pilot said midships!" he snapped. "You call that midships?"

We were sailing down-stream under our own power, passing piers and steamers, but veering toward the right. Instantly I realized that I had not put the wheel far enough over to bring the rudder to dead center, and with all my strength gave it a swift turn to port. Before I could correct the error the captain turned it in the opposite direction and said, softly, but viciously, "Did you ever steer a ship before? Mr. Cassel, send up another man."

A sailor relieved me, and as I left the bridge, utterly humiliated, I heard the mate say: "Probably was in the navy. Everything's backwards, there."

"Well, at any rate," I thought, "they don't suspect that I never set foot upon a ship's bridge before in my life."

On deck I worked with the rest at securing the ship for sea; worked desperately in an effort to relieve the humiliation I had suffered. Suddenly the *Hyacinth* began to pitch, and I glanced up. The quarantine station was behind us, New York was a hazy blur. The winds from the Atlantic were sweeping down upon us, and before me stretched the limitless horizon that I was out to explore.

Chapter Three

DOWN TO EARTH

I WAS awakened that night by a soft pushing at my shoulder. A guarded voice whispered the two words: "Eleven forty-five." It was the lookout. He slumped down on the bench with the flashlight in his hands, staring vacantly at the floor. Then he went out and clumped up the companionway.

I gripped the edge of my bunk and slid to the floor. The fo'castle whirled about me, the floor raised and lowered and slithered from side to side. Everything in the fo'castle seemed to be striking my head, and I could not keep to my feet. I jerked my mackinaw and sou'wester from a nail, struggled into my sea-boots, and staggered toward the door. A whiff of the mess room convulsed me, but I pulled myself up the companionway and plunged into the vicious torrent of wind that swept the decks.

We were far out at sea. The lights on the forward part of the ship glowed softly; and billows of black smoke romped around the cabins to be caught by the wind and strewn aft in streaming, diaphanous shreds. The *Hyacinth* rose on a long swell, poised herself, and settled with a sickening sense of futility into a valley of ocean. A wave smashed against her side, burst into a blaze of foam, and fell over the entire decks. Suddenly eight bells were struck. The lookout began to clang the repeat. I went forward, gripped the rails and climbed up to the bridge.

It was dark and quiet. A man in a heavy black cloak stood leaning against the wheel-house. Within, a light glowing from the compass box revealed the outline of a seaman's face bent over the wheel.

"One eighteen," he said.

"One eighteen," I repeated softly, and stepped into his place. He repeated the course to the figure in black as he went out; and the click of his heels on the iron plates was drowned by the wind. I peered into the binnacle. As the ship rose and fell with the screaming wind I felt that I was being swirled through space in a tornado. Yet I clung to the wheel with the desperation of a drowning man and held the course at one hundred eighteen.

For two hours I stood at the wheel practically unconscious, keeping to my feet only by gripping the spokes with my locked arms. My teeth were clenched in a grip that would have bitten a nail in two, and my eyes, held open by will-power alone, stared into a disk of white light that held the magic number, 118, wavering across a red line.

It seemed utterly futile for me to be standing there. It did not seem possible that I could be of any assistance to the progress of the ship, or that I was doing anything to help her. The mate, standing in the doorway, was only a silent black shadow that kept moving up and down against the bright stars. The two of us, in that moaning blackness, in that little room compressed by darkness and wind, might have been keeping guard over the dead body of a mutual friend.

After an eternity of mental and physical hell, I struck four bells. My watchmate relieved me at the wheel, and I went forward to the fo'castle head on lookout. For two hours, with the salt spray whipping my face and the

wind tearing the breath from my nostrils, I hung to the nose of the *Hyacinth*, and prayed that my seasickness would leave me.

For two days and nights I felt myself to be the nucleus of the general depression that hangs over a ship the first few days out of port. The men were silent at their work, and non-communicative at night in the fo'castle. They tumbled from their bunks to their watches, and from lookout to their bunks again. They ate like condemned prisoners, greedily and silently. They worked like machines that needed only sleep to function properly; but they kept to this routine out of the physical exhaustion of riotous nights ashore. I did so from the utter inability to keep on my feet after my work had been accomplished. Thus my seasickness was noticed by no one.

Gradually, as I became well, the atmosphere of the fo'castle changed. Movements became more spirited, jokes were passed, and laughter and songs started up. I began to notice my shipmates—how many of them there were, and who they were. My mind was beginning to clear; and one evening, after a gluttonous dinner and a torrent of wild conversation, I found myself part and parcel of the crew.

To cement my good will I took a bottle out of my sea bag, tipped it to my lips and set it on the fo'castle floor. Ten pairs of eyes strained in their sockets. An ordinary seaman leaped forward, but a huge Swede caught him by the leg. "A.B.'s only!" he yelled thickly. A lean claw grabbed the bottle, and amid a bedlam of savage cheers the seven A.B.'s passed the bottle among them.

"Hey, Shanghai!" a Liverpool Limey yelled at me, "there's only a bit of a swoggle left! Better 'ave it!"

I reached out for the bottle, drained it in a swift tilt and tossed it out the port.

I had no sleep before my wheel that night. As if to make up for the two days of moroseness every one talked and sang, spun yarns of blood adventures and played at dice for tobacco on the fo'castle floor. When eight bells was struck I went to the wheel feeling that I was one of them. I was considered as a seaman who had drunk and brawled in every port in the world, but since I talked little and endeavored to remain in the background they thought me burdened with a temporary sorrow, and respected my silence. The taunts and jokes flung indiscriminately at the others, I felt, were never intended for me. I had landed in the fo'castle with both feet, and I was glad; for a ship is too small a world in which to bear ostracism.

But it was impossible for me to go on indefinitely without making some mistake by word or deed that would start the bo'sun and men wondering. Close contact in the fo'castle was bound to wear spots in my veneer, and a blunder in work could not be concealed. There was gear to repair, of which I knew nothing. There was gear to be brought from the bo'sun's locker and to be identified by name alone. There were manners and ways of doing things aboard a ship that would puzzle the canniest novice; and day after day during the two hours when I was not needed on lookout I was put on strange jobs and expected to do them.

My first real mistake was in painting the life-boats. "Be sure to rig a line outside so you don't fall overboard," the bo'sun said upon leaving me to go ahead. It seemed simple enough; there was the boat, and all it needed was painting.

I paddled the paint with the brush, and looked the job over. "Well," I thought, "no use in rigging a line outside; *I* can paint the whole thing without falling overboard. So why not begin with the inboard side and paint the outboard side later? If I do fall overboard I'll at least have done half my job."

I went to work, dabbing on the paint and brushing it in like a professional. It was fine work, and I liked it. The sun was bright, the waves danced merrily past us, and the *Hyacinth* was lurching along in splendid fashion. At last I was doing what I had so long envied of other men. I, in blue dungarees and bare shoulders, dabbing life-boats on the topside of a merchant vessel! I, doing real work along with my adventure, helping things along! I finished the inboard half with a flourish and started on the dangerous side. Just then, four bells was struck. I laid down my brush and went up to the wheel.

I came off watch at four and went below to see my watchmate, a stout wrinkled Swede, cursing with depth and feeling, and washing himself as he cursed. He glared at me, dropped his soap and stepped forward, grinding an oath in his throat.

"You . . . !" he gargled. "You paint that inboard side first, eh! An' I get paint all over me painting the outboard side! Every ship I am in they paint the outboard side first!"

He jerked back his elbow. Instinctively I assumed a fierce expression and bowed my arms. "'Smatter with you!" I grunted. "I could 'a' done it without smearin' myself up like a barber pole!" I walked into the fo'castle with a pronounced swagger; for I had rather he think I had painted thus out of a purely selfish choice than out of ignorance.

For several days afterward the hair on the back of our necks lifted when we passed, and we growled deep in our throats. Ah, but it was great! You who live within the arms of the law can not appreciate the thrill of being a cave-man once more.

But that was only the beginning. My watchmate was a bosom friend of the bo'sun, and his anger was contagious. The next time, directly after lunch, the bo'sun came to me with a challenge in his eye.

"The tackle on that after port boom is all wore out," he said, pointing it out carefully. "Get some new rope and reave it through those blocks, one-and-two, and make a nice neat splice. Know how I mean?"

I glanced at him carelessly and tossed my cigarette over the side. "Sure," I replied, as if to say: "Easy . . . you ought to see how we do it in the old clipper ships!"

"How does it go?" he challenged.

"Go? How do you mean, go? 'Course it goes in the reg'lar fashion, up and over . . ." I knew that a glance at the other booms would show me the method in an instant, but I could not explain.

He was not fully satisfied and went on to elucidate, the other seamen standing about puzzled, suspicious and expecting something. What was up? Had the bo'sun a grudge against Shanghai?

I strolled forward to get the rope, and then began my work on the after-hatch. On the pretense of looking for something, the bo'sun passed me now and then, to see how I was progressing, and once crossed the hatch not a step from me. I chuckled inside. What an oaf! I had laid the tackle perfectly, with great care and pains. Then I nestled the huge block in my lap, laid my enormous sea knife beside me and began to splice.

I had spliced lariat rope before, but I wanted to make this a particularly good job. I cut off the loose ends, and chipped away the rust as I did the splice mentally, playing for time and knowing that the eyes of the bo'sun were upon me. Was the rope left-handed, or right-handed, I wondered. Should I start under or over? I slipped the fid between the strands, and began to splice. Apparently satisfied, the bo'sun walked off.

When my watchmate came from the wheel at two o'clock, I had spliced and unspliced a dozen times. I was getting frantic, and had apparently forgotten all I ever knew about splicing. Somehow, it didn't look right; it didn't lay smoothly, and when I turned it over it seemed to be twisted out of shape. I took it all out and started over again.

The bo'sun came by for the twenty-fifth time and glanced down. "Your wheel!" he said ominously. He called one of the day men who took up the work and finished it almost before I had turned away.

From then on, things began to be a bit strained between the bo'sun and me. He was puzzled, but very peeved because he could not solve me. Was I a seaman or wasn't I? I steered well, I did beautiful splicing at times and I seemed to know my way about the ship; but there was something about me that was not quite right, something not entirely seamanlike. He put me on the hardest jobs the ship could offer, and sometimes when I worked he glanced around quickly as if he thought I were laughing behind his back. The bo'sun's suspicion was contagious. The crew caught it. They watched me like cats, and the ordinary seaman stood on the side-lines waiting for the kill.

To stave off the dénouement, and to make my existence

in the fo'castle bearable as long as possible, I decided to change my tactics. I would go on the offensive; I would keep them respectfully puzzled. My facility with bad grammar and a marvelous vocabulary of West Coast oaths came out stronger than ever, and within two days I had established a bellicose indifference which asked nothing of any man. When I worked, I worked hard, disregarding the rest. When I didn't know the job in hand, I simply didn't do it and made no apologies. I loafed or smoked. When the crew grumbled over the food I praised it and ate heartily; when they ate I grumbled. When they laughed and made jokes at night I kept silent and aloof. I took no sides. I was alone, and I let them know it.

The result was miraculous. To the great disgust of the bo'sun I got along famously with every man in the fo'castle. Only he and my watchmate, both of them Swedes, stood together against me like the prongs of a sling-shot. The rest of them shared the bo'sun's suspicion, but they were loyal enough to the fo'castle to keep their feet on neutral ground.

I was at peace for a while, and began to size up the crew as individuals. The unspeakable filthiness of their conversation and their unbounded brutality and coarseness had driven all the sympathy for them out of me. They were not old seasoned sailors, rich in color and filled with odd tales of adventure. Most of them had worked on land as much as on the sea. They had been hoboes, steel-workers and lumberjacks. The true flavor of the sea, that I so longed to find, was not in them.

There was Shorty, a squat little runt with the arms of a gorilla, and a nasty grin frozen into his face. He was a born story-teller and an accomplished liar. He moved

slowly, as if he had rheumatism, but once on a job he worked with the fury of a madman. If any one else touched a rope he was pulling at, he immediately let go and glared at the offender from under his bushy brows. For all that, he had a sense of humor, an inherent honesty and faith in humanity. He left his soap in the washroom; he often left his can of tobacco on deck while he was at the wheel. But he had no sympathy for the ordinary seamen, and no tenderness. When the others were on the verge of tears over some intensely emotional song, he guffawed and booed like a baboon. He was not a seaman, but he was perhaps the foulest person on the ship.

There was Scotty, a sincere but untrustworthy Limey, always ready to help an inexperienced man, never jesting cruelly, always sympathetic. Once when I was sewing on canvas, and making a bad job of it, he came over very quietly and showed me the proper stitch. But his sympathies were too sudden, and his anger too quickly aroused to confide in. Oley Olesen was a great Norwegian child, honest as a grocer, and, when no one was looking, very anxious to help an inexperienced man. Nicodemus had a slight trace of sympathy in his eyes, which really arose from a feeling of nautical superiority. On second glance one would call it pity; on a third, scorn. I noticed it when I was sewing on canvas. But although he was dishonest, arrogant and disloyal, this variable pity saved him from being as cruel as the rest. There was my watchmate, with the eye of a dead shark, sloping shoulders, a bull neck and a wrinkled face. His quick temper always brought us nose to nose. The rest of them were all about the same; put them into a hat, juggle them together so that they rubbed against one another a bit, and

you could not tell them apart in the time you have to read.

The gem of the ship was Harris, a little New Zealand oiler. Night after night he brought out his little electric toaster, and we had toast and sirup before our watches. He incurred the hatred of the A. B.'s by giving toast to the ordinary seamen; he helped the mess-boy, out of sympathy, and the crew thought he did it only to gain special favors. He put himself out to help, to be of service to any one and every one, and discriminated nowhere. He was always talking, and his eyes were for ever bobbing around in his head like two little puppies, as if they knew exactly what he wanted, and were beside themselves with enthusiasm to show it to him.

But with Port Said only five days away, the men were beginning to reek with their own thoughts. Their talk and deportment was of the most depraved character, and when I wrote in my diary in the mess room within sound of their voices it seemed that my pen dripped slime. I longed to be shipwrecked upon the coast of Africa, and to bury myself in the sand. Surely it would have drawn the clogging filth from pores. This was not what I sought in the sea. For my own peace I would hold out with these men until the first port, but there I would leave the *Hyacinth* and all connected with her. I would leave this floating factory, this kernel of hell, and make my own adventures. Then there would be no regrets.

That night at the fo'castle head the ghost of my wish appeared. I was bending over the bow, watching the dolphins sporting about the cutwater—leaping and diving in streaks of phosphor like boys running ahead of a parade; and so absorbed was I in their sleek gentlemanly antics that I did not hear six bells struck. I glanced up

some time later to see land on the port bow. What was more, we were actually headed into it.

I was alarmed at first, for I should have seen it before and signaled to the bridge with the bell. But now it was too late. Surely the mate had seen it; and even if he hadn't, his charts would surely have given him his position. Dawn gradually dimmed the lesser stars and in a few moments I saw that we were scarcely a mile from shore and that directly ahead of us were mountains.

It was a ghostly and unreal land of cavernous colors and glittering high lights. Jagged peaks rose up purple and hostile from the water's edge. There, where the faint glow of dawn diluted the blackness, was a strip of sandy beach. I could distinctly see the waves breaking upon the shore, and the pockets and ribbons of golden sand that traced the outlines of the hard-bitten rocks. In another five minutes we would strike! It was my duty to warn the mate of the danger ahead; but try as I did, my muscles refused to strike the bell; I could not bring myself to pull the *Hyacinth* out of danger. Here was freedom, escape and a magnificent adventure! Shipwreck upon an unknown coast, against a rise of ghastly purple mountains!

The five minutes passed, struck out by thumpings of my own heart; yet still we did not strike. Seven bells rang out from the wheel-house, and with a tightening in my throat which almost choked me I clanged the repeat, clear and full, and cried, "All's well!"

I turned swiftly away. The mountains were standing there like a thunder-cloud, but the ship seemed to be motionless. I looked down at the cutwater and saw two little wings of white spray. We were still moving.

Suddenly the mountains lost their cliffs and ravines.

They stood before us like a cypress hedge, inky black, and secure in the breathless silence. We could not come closer. The little dash of white at the cutwater still told that we were moving, yet some destiny was holding the *Hyacinth* from her end.

I glanced back at the bridge, and faced the bow once more to see the mountains not a stone's throw from the ship, hovering over us like a cliff! We would strike! Any minute we would strike! It was all over, now; and with the weakness of guilt upon me and lurid visions of the disaster swimming in my eyes, I hung over the rail and waited for the wreck.

One bell, knocked out with a vicious clang, straightened me up with a shock. I glanced upward, blinked my eyes and cursed softly. The horizon appeared clear and unbroken in the early dawn. The sea spread before me into eternity. As if by magic the rocky shores had vanished; and a faint breeze rippled the ocean into a mocking smile as I turned aft, and walked the entire length of the accursed *Hyacinth* to call the watch. I realized that we had faired through nothing more than a cloud bank, yet until long after sunrise I sat upon the after-bitts, swaying dumbly to the roll of the sea, and praying for the wreck of the *Hyacinth*.

We passed the castled crags of Malta and plodded through a squadron of British destroyers that slipped around us like greyhounds and disappeared over the horizon to drop depth bombs and rattle the windows in our wheel-house with the vibrations of their big guns. The coast of Africa appeared and faded in a succession of mirages; and finally, on the fourth day from Gibraltar, word was passed for all hands to stand by, for we would reach Port Said by midnight.

No one slept or tried to sleep. The food had gone from bad to worse, we had not seen land for several days, and it was twenty-two days since the men had spent a night ashore. They were tired and sick, and the excitement of reaching the notorious city vibrated like a fever from the lips and finger-tips of every man aboard.

In the mess room a violent argument started up between the firemen and the carpenter; the seamen took sides indiscriminately, breaking off now and then to swill the luke-warm coffee and eat some of the cold meats and stale bread that had been served out as a night lunch. Arguments went on in the fo'castle, on deck, and in the companionways; silly arguments without head or tail, but arguments which worked the men into frenzies of groundless excitement. Carlos, a greasy little Cuban oiler, wondered who all the streets in New York were named after. He wondered if he wrote a letter to the president would the president create a "Carlos Street"? Some one said that the presidents had no power to do such things; another vowed that the president could kill a man if he wanted to. A Limey declared that England won the war. A Squarehead contradicted him, and said it was Sweden. Somehow, the war got tangled up with presidents, streets, Christian Science and wireless. It was a mad insane concatenation of words in which men spoke sharply, went on deck to smoke in silence, and then returned to plunge with blazing enthusiasm into the cauldron of shrill laughter, headless phrases, stinking bodies, flashing eyes and crazily distorted faces, that danced in a kaleidoscopic madness within the naked white walls of the mess room. On deck, two engineers paced up and down, silently, side by side.

The lights of Port Said twinkled on our beam. Quiet

came over the ship. The seamen lined her rail, and she belched fire from her single stack into the blackness as the pilot came alongside and swung himself up the strong-ladder. Eight bells sounded from the wheel-house, and I went forward.

The captain glanced at me sharply, and my good friend, the second mate, edged near to me as if to give encouragement, or, if need be, advice. But there was no need of advice, nor was there any excuse for sharp glances. I swung the *Hyacinth* through the buoys in an accurate parabola, passed the glittering city, and crept up to the mouth of the Suez Canal.

"All right," said the pilot. He pulled the control. A bell rang, and the engines throbbed to a halt.

Outside, foreign voices called in the darkness. A rope splashed in the water and the lusty "Heavva-ho!" of the bo'sun bellowed through the night. The winches hissed and rumbled; scrambled over themselves in a desperate fury of iron and steam, and we were moored at the gateway of the Far East, somewhere near Port Said.

I stepped from the bridge with wings on my feet; I had made good with the ship. But my head whirled with the unfathomable mystery of our entrance. Once more, I, and all the men aboard the *Hyacinth,* seemed of no more importance than the rust splotches on her hull. She had been sufficient unto herself, and by some cautious intelligence had nosed her way into a resting-place for the night. The captain and pilot, like text-books to Solomon, were little fools upon her bridge, and I, at the wheel, had been a mere fixture—a crass commercial cog of which she took no notice.

I went aft and gave a hand in making her doubly secure with lines from the port and starboard quarters. I turned

on a steam winch, slipped a hawser over the drum, and was taking in the slack when the rope caught at the mooring, and began to run out at a terrific rate. In a swift movement I grasped it to make a third turn around the drum; I succeeded, yet in that instant the rope leaped beneath me like a whipsnake, and struck me in the groin. I scarcely felt the shock, and kept on working until the ship had been fully secured and we were told to knock off for the night.

Before the last steam winch had rumbled to a halt a file of stealthy Arabs trooped aft carrying black grips and boxes. They laid these containers on the No. 5 hatch and opened them. Under the starlight silks glowed with a warmth that compelled me to fondle and crush them in my fingers. Ropes of amber beads caught the mellowness of the cool night and lay secure in their beauty. Out came whistles and canes, chocolate and dates, and a festive array of flashily-boxed cigarettes.

Abdul, a great heaving bulk with a solitary tooth gleaming between his thick lips, squatted behind this exotic jumble of merchandise and spread a fat hand over each thigh. On either side of him were two sons, as unlike as four lumps of coal, and each with a red fez set upon his head at an individual angle. Each of them kept one eye open and alert. The other eye was closed as if in deep slumber.

The haggling began, the joking and jesting, the cursing and the merriment of barter, the game of trying to drive a shrewd bargain with the cunningest merchants in the world; all before the hour of dawn, when the rest of the world was asleep and the full lusciousness of the Nile Valley was borne to my nostrils in a clean breeze.

As the crowd thinned out the heads behind the mer-

chandise nodded, and fell slowly backward. The thick lips parted and gluttonous nostrils gorged themselves upon the morning air. A fly, early and inquisitive, investigated the solitary tooth of Abdul, found it promising and disappeared inside. The ship was quiet except for four discordant snores; and asleep except for four alert eyes.

But I could not sleep, and it was impossible for me to remain quiet, for we were in darkness at the gateway to the Orient. To the right was Egypt; to the left Arabia; on and ever on were Bombay, Singapore, Java . . .

Anxiously I watched the stars go out. The land took form, and I gasped; for the dawn, breaking over Port Said like a divine forgiveness, revealed an enormous Standard Oil tank squatting on a vast expanse of ochercolored sand.

But due east—straight ahead—was a narrow lane of greenish water that flowed into the rising sun. That sun was rising out of India.

Chapter Four

BED-ROCK

The *Hyacinth* steamed slowly through the Suez Canal. Clumps of date-palms arose from the papyrus grass on our right in a delicate filigree against the sky; to the southeast was Arabia, glistening like salt, and hazy with heat waves. Jogging along the tow-path were two little burrows piled high with fagots; and on each pile of fagots sat a huge fellah, like a hippo in the stern of a canoe.

It was my wheel again. I went forward, limped painfully up the stairs to the bridge, and entered the wheelhouse. The captain glanced at me sharply.

"Say, what's the matter?" he asked. "Hurt?"

"Oh, a little bruise," I replied in a deprecating manner; but I rolled up the leg of my dungarees and showed him my groin.

"My God, man!" he cried. "Why didn't you tell me about this?"

He reprimanded the mate severely for not having observed my condition before and reported it to him. I was ordered to my bunk immediately, a relief was called to the wheel, and that afternoon the captain treated my injury as best he could in his cabin. He commanded me not to appear on the bridge again until I was completely cured.

I thought it was fine to be relieved of shifting anchor-chains and painting the main deck during my day watch; but the penalty of lying inside the fo'castle all day long

was more than I could bear. I stuck it out all the next day, however, and that night at twelve I went up to take my wheel once more.

Thereafter the captain generally passed through the wheel-house when he was on the bridge to see how I was getting on; and day after day, his inquiries, together with my determination to leave the *Hyacinth* at the first good port, began to form an idea in my brain. It was a crooked idea, but if anything's fair in love and war it was justifiable; for life on the Hyacinth was *both.*

Why not use my injury as an excuse for leaving the ship? If I took French leave I would have to do so under cover of night; and since I had signed articles for the return trip to New York I would not be paid in full until the ship reached New York. I could draw half of my wages, perhaps, but not more. Now, if I worked hard and let my injury grow worse I could demand to be sent to a hospital in any port I chose. I would be paid off in full, and when the ship sailed I would leave the hospital a free man, and with enough rupees to see me to Borneo. Then, if I ever decided to go home, I would have a clean discharge slip to show a consul or a captain.

Thus my problems of deserting the ship were solved. I felt free of the *Hyacinth* and all connected with her. I no longer cared what the crew thought of me. I would stop my bluff, hoist my true colors, be myself and take the consequences.

But there was no need to settle my own little problems, for there was mutiny in the air. The whisky had been bad, the heat was terrific, and the food was becoming almost uneatable. Gravel and warehouse sweepings were mixed in with the beans, the meat was coarse and blue, the potatoes were dyspeptic, and the coffee was like

molten lead. So thought the seamen; and, since I had never seen a real mutiny, I agreed heartily. With the door locked we sat on empty orange crates and plotted.

The captain, of course, was held responsible. It was his duty, we agreed, to provide good food in a sufficient quantity to sustain our working ability. He had failed. The bo'sun had gone forward in our behalf to say that he could not expect us to carry on unless better fare were provided; but the quality of the food had not changed. The only obstacle in the way of a successful rebellion was the lack of coordination between the black gang, the mess-boys and ourselves.

We hated the mess-boys. They were huge hulking brutes, big-boned and heavy-handed, covered with skin diseases. Their heads were shaved like convicts'. They never washed, and went around naked from the waist up. One of them wore an officer's cap and a pair of filthy khaki pants cut off at the knee. He was like a derelict tugboat skipper with a red skull. The other had a glittering array of gold teeth, and when he glared at me with his pale blue eyes, I felt that his mouth was full of dead men's bones. Between them, they tried to rule the mess room.

The mess-boys, in turn, hated the cooks; the cooks hated the steward. We hated the steward but liked the cooks; we hated the carpenter but liked the bo'sun; and the bo'sun liked the carpenter. The black gang took sides indiscriminately. Figure it out for yourself.

Mutiny? Except for a little bloodletting on the bridge, mutinies, to-day, begin and end in the fo'castle. As the *Hyacinth* threaded her way through the Suez Canal, our mutiny took the form of a drunken brawl that turned the fo'castle into a shambles of blood and whisky.

"To hell with the arguments!" cried Leach. "Let's have a drink!" He knocked the neck off a bottle and threw a splash of liquor on the floor. Olesen tossed in a match, and the fo'castle lighted up in flames.

The white scar on Leach's cheek grew livid and drew his mouth to his eye in a grin. "Boy! that's good liquor!" he cried. A howl of delight came through a dozen mouths; two more bottles were uncorked, and for a few moments I could hear only a smothered gargling and the smacking of thick lips.

Scotty drank boisterously; the Northlanders drank like thirsty children. Half-naked and sweating, they reeled against one another waiting for an incautious nudge or a hasty word to ignite their berserker rages. Alabama and Limey, half in earnest, wrestled furiously through several bunks, leaped apart and scrambled for the companionway. They tore down the fire axes, and, with a drunken challenge to the captain, began to wreck the fo'castle.

Leach slapped one of the ordinary seamen across the mouth; Scotty smashed a bottle against the mess-boys' room. He heaved his tremendous bulk against the door, stood back and flung himself at it again. Cursing and shrieking the vilest imprecations, Leach and Olesen joined him; and together they tried to break down the door and get at the mess-boys.

Suddenly they stopped. "Chips!" yelled Scotty. The carpenter, going from the mess room, was caught at the head of the companionway and borne to the deck by three maniacs who began to beat him to a senseless pulp. The bo'sun came bellowing out of his cabin, kicked the writhing mass of arms and legs until only one body was left prostrate on the deck.

The mess-boys came out, the black gang poured into the fo'castle. Sea-boots and boxes crashed against the walls. Then men, no longer recognizing one another, struck out with their fists in the pure joy of feeling the impact of their knuckles against yielding flesh. I caught the flash of gold teeth against a livid red face, and recognized one of the mess-boys; a shaved head and a naked back streaked with blood hurtled through the entrance. A bottle zoomed through the heavy atmosphere and struck the wall behind me. With a curse and a vicious snarl Nicodemus slung a sea-boot at my face.

Some one nudged me in the ribs, and a calm voice said, "Eleven forty-five."

My wheel. I went on deck, and stared at the sky as if I had never seen it before.

The next morning I was awakened by a beautiful voice that accompanied the soft strumming of a guitar. With a great tenderness and full-bodied sympathy, strains of an Italian lyric mellowed the stench of my brain like a beautiful thought. I turned over, and glanced down to see Scotty squatted on the fo'castle floor beneath my bunk. His great shaggy head was upturned to the ceiling, and one hairy arm almost covered the guitar. He swayed slightly as he sang, and at intervals he paused, as if drawing too heavily upon the loveliness within him.

He apologized for waking me; and when I replied that it was worth being awakened to hear he went into guffaws of laughter, flung the guitar into a corner and went on deck. It was thus that we sailed into the Red Sea.

At noon of that same day the after-deck was hung with springs and mattresses, and men were at work stretching canvas awnings fore and aft. To our left were the tawny peaks of Arabia, invisible except for

the glistening triangles of white sand that betrayed their ravines—sand blown from the vast desert of the Sudan on our right. We moved across an expanse of pale blue ocean, flat and prostrated by the sun.

I came off watch at the fo'castle head at four the next morning just as the sun's glow was beginning to show on the horizon. My singlet and dungarees were soaked with perspiration. On the deck, aft, some of the men who could not sleep were smoking. Others were tossing on their mattresses, cursing in their sleep. Those who slept, slept noisily, like sea animals, breathing heavily through their mouths, and exhaling with a gasping noise. I spread my own mattress on the hawser table and lay down. The sun was not yet up.

I could not have slept for more than three hours when I dreamed that I was being scorched by flames. They burned my skin and seared my face; yet in the stupor of utter fatigue I slept on. The dream persisted; I became unbearably uncomfortable, and, finally, the reality of the sensation and the nervous exhaustion of trying to escape it awakened me. The awning was about three feet above my face, and the sun was beating through it as if it were a pane of glass. Still drowsy with sleep I tumbled down upon the deck and lay near the taffrail where the heat was less intense.

Not long afterward I became conscious of a cool, sharp breeze upon my left arm. I was still drowsy and numb, and my body was soaked with perspiration. I thought a wind had sprung up, and was thankful. Then the breeze came in gasps, short and quick. I awakened to find that there was no breeze, but merely that the slow, regular breaths through my nostrils were striking my arm.

For five days and five nights the Red Sea held us panting with its heat. The day men, working beneath the awnings, shook themselves like wet dogs, and the sweat sizzled on the deck. I wore a huge pair of shoes insulated inside with newspapers, yet I could not stand in one spot very long without extreme discomfort. The heat waves arose from the decks in a haze, making the entire forward part of the ship look as if I were seeing it through a pane of cheap glass.

From two to four P. M. I painted the strong-backs over the No. 3 hatch. There was an awning stretched above me, yet my flow of perspiration was so free that when paint splashed over my face and hands it flowed off the skin, and fell with the water in a steady drip into the depths of the hold. I went into the engine room to get a hack-saw, and the railings blistered my hands. By the time I came out I was running perspiration into my shoes.

Two seamen went into the fore peak to get more red lead but did not return. I went up to hurry them along and found Leach talking foolishly and stumbling around the gear. Olesen was unconscious. The air was like putty, hot and poisonous with paint fumes.

On the third day my watchmate became unconscious with a heat-stroke. An engineer and Limey suffered heat-strokes also, and were laid up covered with blankets, and shivering. The other seamen were haggard and vacant of eye. They could scarcely drag themselves to and from their watches. The bo'sun was a bright crimson; he looked as if he had been blown up with a bicycle pump.

That night in the wheel-house the perspiration ran off me like rain down the side of a house. The captain, muttering that it was the hottest run through the Red

Sea he had made in twelve years, sat in a deck chair clad in a pair of shorts, with two electric fans playing upon him. In a life-boat full of water lay the supercargo, his head resting upon a thwart. The floor of the wheel-house was soaked with the sweat of many bodies, and the heavy rope mat oozed water like a sponge whenever I shifted my feet. It amused me, going aft past the galley, to see the stove and to feel its gentle heat.

The fifth day was almost too much for any mortal man to bear. The dead hot calm was maddening. As far as the eye could reach, the sea was expressionless of anything save intense heat. I gazed upon the glassy sea and wondered if I were actually seeing a liquid. It was hard to convince myself that real water actually could exist under such an atmosphere. If it *were* water, it could not be cold. It would be hot and tasteless.

The atmosphere was abnormally clear. Far off, on the African shore, the heat waves magnified a coral reef to the size of an island. A group of coral fishers on the shore moved about like a herd of giraffes. Once I observed a thin black streak extending from the horizon to high in the sky, where it finally disappeared. It was some time before I could believe that it actually was the smoke from a steamer beyond the horizon; and even then, it was so flawlessly straight and unbroken that it seemed to be the steamer's stack that extended miles into the air and blossomed out into smoke.

Four men were laid up in their bunks, the bo'sun was a gasping pyramid of flesh, and the officers lay motionless in deck chairs. I loved that heat. I worked in the sun and liked it. I loved its bite upon my skin and its terrific impact under the awnings. I felt that I was alive and sharing an experience in life that is immortal.

I was at the wheel when the light flashed at Aden, and before I had gone off watch at the fo'castle head that morning the *Hyacinth* was rolling in the long swell of the Arabian Sea.

Chapter Five

COMPENSATIONS

We were tied up at a dock. Two steel cranes bent over our decks. Behind them was an ugly stone warehouse, and in the distance stretched a vast expanse of sand and yellow clay. There was not a living soul to be seen.

"Ye gods!" I said to Harris, "when are we ever going to reach India?"

"India?" he cried. "Why, this *is* India! Karachi's in India!"

I could scarcely believe him. There had been nothing dramatic in our entrance. The landscape, the sky and my heart were perfectly normal, and the water-front was about as inspiring as a Jersey mud-flat.

I laughed. It was so utterly different from what I had expected to find that I had to laugh or else jump overboard. I felt like a pilgrim arriving at his destination through a potter's field. But it was justice. Could I expect India to fling herself at my feet? Could I expect her, within ten minutes, to fulfill the dreams of twenty years? I realized more keenly than ever the necessity for leaving the *Hyacinth* as soon as possible; the necessity for getting into the heart of things if I were ever to discover the beauty that had lured me ten thousand miles from home.

The crew made up for my disinclination to go ashore by revealing to me their own impression of India. At seven bells by the ship's clock a Hindu came up the gang-

plank bearing a heavy burden on his back. He pattered aft softly and laid the greasy form of a fireman in a heap outside the fo'castle door. The Hindu pattered away, disappeared into the night, and a moment later two oilers came aboard. They glanced down at the motionless body. One of them lighted a match and turned the face from the iron deck. "Old Mac can't hold his liquor like he used to," he said. They laughed boisterously and clumped below.

I turned in to sleep, but was awakened some time later by the mate, who ordered me to come on deck. "Got to get the crew aboard," he explained. "We're sailing in a couple of hours."

The after-port winch was hissing steam, and a net-sling lay in a heap on the deck. A cluster light revealed the crew on the dock below me, heaped together like corpses about to be burned. The mate let the net down, I spread it out and dragged the men into it by the heels. The winch rumbled, and the crew of the *Hyacinth* was swung into the air and dropped on deck, snoring away bright visions of India. I left them where they lay, bothering only to release the net from the boom tackle.

The next morning I passed by the galley to see two strange cooks. The mess-boys, I noticed, were badly cut up about the face; and it developed that one quarrel had been settled ashore. The cooks were in a hospital in Karachi.

I sailed the Indian Ocean in a fo'castle of drunken seamen. The black gang was doped with hashish and whisky, Leach struck the mate and was sent from the wheel, Scotty and Alabama were too drunk to stand watch, and the remainder of the crew were sick in mind and body. The *Hyacinth* was rotten to the core, and

try as I might, I could love her mangy hull no longer.

But with Bombay, India began to grow upon me. Swarms of brightly clad natives came aboard to work out the cargo. Fortune-tellers and beggars, snake-charmers and bird-venders began to mill about our decks ten minutes after we had made fast. They cooked their dinners in little black pots on deck. When evening came they sat in groups under the bulkhead lights, waiting to help the drunken seamen aboard.

For five days I lost myself within the life of Bombay. From dawn until midnight I wandered through the depths of the city, pausing to rest, to admire and to wonder. Here were beggars and charlatans who captivated crowds with the magic of their hands; here were stately Afghans, and great tall men from the plains of Tibet, clad in heavy robes and fur-lined boots. I followed a Rain Procession down Calchapur Road, and sat outside a Hindu temple with a Mohammedan, watching the natives clang bells and praise the porcelain cow within.

When the time came for the *Hyacinth* to sail I was so much refreshed in mind that I decided to go on with her to Calcutta. We set sail, but in three days, to my intense surprise, we put in at Colombo, on the island of Ceylon.

I determined to see Ceylon. Even though the mate had come aft and bawled out, "No shore leave . . . ship's in quarantine!" and although the bo'sun had bellowed, "No shore leave for *nobody*," and looked me squarely in the eye, I knew that I would go ashore in Ceylon. Tall cocoanut-palms, the tallest and most luxuriant I had ever seen, swayed gently over the white beach, little red tile roofs glistened between them like

bars of gold, and in the harbor, motionless upon the clear water, were fleets of strange craft, crazily shaped, gaudily painted and of a sail and rig that made the *Hyacinth* look like a modern packing box with straw sticking out through the cracks.

Since daylight I had been sitting on the hatch cover staring at the shore. It looked clean and fresh, too rare to miss. The crew was forbidden to pollute its beauty, but I would get there if I had to swim. Anxious to be as discreet as possible, however, I went up to the captain and asked what the possibilities of shore leave were.

He wrinkled up his nose. "Well," he said, "ship's in quarantine. Hm! there's always some way to skin the cat. I'm going ashore about ten-thirty. Come along with me in the launch. You can carry some papers or books along and pass as my secretary. But, if you get caught," he added, "don't come to me! It's your own lookout!"

It was then eight A. M., so I went aft and sat on a bitt, chewing my finger-nails until ten-thirty should roll around. The crew was having a glorious time swimming. They had let a rope ladder over the stern, and were swimming from it to the buoys, laughing and splashing around like country schoolboys.

The bo'sun came by several times and fixed me with a sharp glance. He apparently had seen me talking to the captain, and had his suspicions.

"You ain't goin' ashore, are you?" he snapped.

"No, Bo'sun," I replied sweetly, knowing that within forty-five minutes I would be disappearing down the back streets of Colombo.

He grunted in a satisfied manner and strolled forward.

I was under a further, and more complete guard, of

three native harbor policemen who had come aboard in bare feet and blue uniforms. They had strict orders to keep watch over every man aboard, and patrolled the decks from bow to stern, keeping their eyes particularly on the sailors swimming about the buoys.

At ten o'clock exactly, just as I was beginning to think of going below to change into a pair of shorts, I heard the rapid putt-putt of a motor-boat and turned around to see an open launch bounding around the stern toward the shore. Seated smugly in the stern sheets was the captain, his back toward me.

I boiled with anger. I cursed that double-crossing skipper up and down, inside and out, from the tips of my fingers and the bottom of my soul. An instant later I was in the fo'castle. I changed from my heavy dungarees and blue shirt to a very light pair of shorts and an equally light shirt. There was no time to lose; I realized that I should have escaped at dawn, but I would go now anyway. I carefully tied all my money in a handkerchief and secured it in a flap pocket together with my A. B. ticket and seaman's passport, fully prepared in case I decided not to come back to the ship. Then I slipped up the companionway, and looked out on deck. The bo'sun was nowhere in sight, but one of those cursed harbor policemen was hanging over the taffrail watching the sailors. In the offing, idling in the waves, were several small sampans manned by Singhalese and Hindus. They were looking for business, but were kept at a respectful distance by the policemen.

Finally the bluecoat went forward; and no sooner had he passed the galley than I slipped out of the cabin, slid down the rope ladder and began swimming for the salvation of my soul toward the nearest of the boats. The

sailors looked on astounded, but made no outcry. A boatman rowed toward me, and five minutes later I pulled myself over the gunwales and crouched down into the deep stern. He pulled stoutly for the shore and asked no questions.

We were not a hundred yards from the ship, but I could not, for the life of me, look back. I was sure that I had been observed. The *Hyacinth* lay behind me like a red brick wall, and either the mate or the bo'sun must have seen me. But it made no difference, for I had escaped. In a half-hour's time she was a mere outline against the breakwater, and I, almost completely dried by the sun, paid the boatman and set foot upon the island of Ceylon.

A paved street lined with white buildings led back from the quay. Another paved street led to the right, and still another to the left; all flanked by office buildings, all desolate and smug. I paused for my bearings, located the center of Colombo, and headed down the middle street.

Precious and semi-precious stones flashed from the shop windows—fire-opals, rubies, cat's-eyes, and a hundred others that I had never seen before. A man hurried after me with a beautiful model of a catamaran; another with his hair done up like a woman's gestured toward a basket of ebony elephants and carved ivory. I came to the end of the paved road, dived into the recesses of the town, and found myself in the midst of an exotic bazar.

Women brushed past me with baskets of fruits balanced upon their heads, shopkeepers weighed out sticky foods, fishmongers called their wares, and little boys and girls crawled through the crowds gathering remnants. Stacks of dates, baskets of fruits, and heap upon heap of

market produce were piled in the shadow and sunlight of the noonday.

I paused beside a shop to watch a man winnowing grain; and as I stood there the Singhalese proprietor asked if I were a stranger in the island and would I like to see the bazar and know more about its merchandise. His address was so thoroughly charming, and his wife looked at me in such a winning way that I could not but accept with thanks. So he left his shop in charge of his wife, and we continued on through the aisles; I, stopping every few feet to admire and wonder.

My companion picked little oranges from the baskets, cut them open and insisted that I eat them. He sliced mangoes for me, and invited me to taste of tiny seeds, spices and raw peppers of which there were heaping baskets at our elbows. Always he told me the native names, and if I did not repeat the name to his satisfaction, he would snatch a radish for me to eat, saying as I chewed, *"Moolee, moolee,"* over and over again, as if the taste would imprint the name in my mind for ever.

At length I could eat no more, and said that my stomach was out of order; whereupon he danced away in the crowd to return with a green cocoanut which had been opened at the top, and overflowed with rich cool milk. This, he assured me, was a cure for all stomach disorders and was drunk regularly by all the inhabitants of Ceylon.

When we returned to his little shop it was well past noon, and I was hungry. Natives were squatted everywhere, eating, and women lurched through the aisles bearing immense steaming panniers of food. I told my host that I, too, wished to eat, whereupon he grinned, and said that it was not good for a young Sahib to eat in the streets with natives—but I assured him that it did

not matter, that I was hungry and would eat anything that they ate.

Immediately his wife bustled between us with a steaming crater of rice, filled with pickled fish and vegetables and covered with a reddish gravy. She cleared some fruits from a corner of the shop table, laid the plate down, and stepped back with a flourish. My guest brought up a box for me to sit upon, and insisted upon arranging a screen of newspapers and banana leaves between me and the street. A fresh young cocoanut came next; and I dined in absolute privacy to the great delight of the little Singhalese and his fat wife.

When I left, he escorted me outside the bazar, politely refused to accept any money, and wished me the happiest kind of a voyage.

Very casually I wandered toward the outskirts of the city, watching the children at play and the men and women at their leisurely occupations. As I was examining the remains of an old Dutch wall clutched in the roots of a banyan tree, a soft voice greeted me politely, and I turned to see a little Singhalese standing at my shoulder. It appeared that he was a sort of free-lance guide who herded tourists during the winter season. Now, having nothing in particular to do, he offered to take me anywhere I cared to go just for the pleasure of my company. Good enough, I thought; he might be able to show me a few elephants or a couple of tigers; and as we strolled along I asked if there were any wild elephants left in the island.

Elephants? Wild-elephant hunting was a passion with this little fellow! The jungles, he said, were full of them, and with appropriate gestures he began to narrate extraordinary adventures he had had with the beasts. They

were found in tribes, he said, and because of their cunningness were rarely found by those who sought to kill them with guns. His method, he explained, was to seek out an elephant standing beside a tree in deep slumber. Then, provided with a stout rope, he crept noiselessly up to the beast and tied his hind leg to the tree. Of course, the elephant thrashed around a bit; but, in the course of time, having suffered no harm and being mollified by kindness, it permitted itself to be tied to tame elephants and eventually became a valuable piece of property. In one day, he said casually, he had captured as many as twenty elephants in this fashion.

He asked if I cared to go on an elephant hunt with him, but I replied that just now I was looking around the world for a place to settle down. I knew, however, that if I missed the *Hyacinth,* nothing would delight me more than to stay in Ceylon and spend the rest of my life trying to bind the hind leg of an elephant to a great ebony tree.

The impulse to miss the ship grew stronger with each successive tale, and I was actually on the verge of deciding to try the foolish elephant-hunting venture when a huge omnibus rolled by in a cloud of dust. Painted on its side in large red letters was the one word: "Kandy."

I stared after the bus in astonishment. Kandy!

"Why," I said to my companion, "that's the place that Sinbad visited. Do busses actually go there?"

He replied firmly that they did, and added that he had never heard of Sinbad, but that Kandy was, without doubt, the most enchanting city this side of heaven.

I told him that I could not possibly pay his expenses to Kandy, and he not only understood, but insisted upon giving me the name and address of a relative who lived there, and who would be glad to take me in. I thanked

him warmly with two rupees, and his blessings for my happiness and welfare were still going strong when I jumped on the next bus and waved farewell.

Just before sunset we came to the top of a range of high mountains. The countryside was spotted with little ponds, and a luxuriant growth of tropical foliage, smothering the hills into an undulating blanket of greenery, stretched away to a waste of white clouds that held us in the sky. We spiraled higher, dipped through a gorge and began to descend into the valley of the Kandian Kings.

An amphitheater of green mountains surrounded us completely. Far below were glistening strips and dots that I knew to be the bends of a river. Those little white patches would be houses; there was a lake, and not far off was a great white palace with a red tile roof. As we descended closer, the river, I could see, meandered through the valley in a lazy way, browsing through the meadows, investigating the foot-hills, finally to swing around the city in an eternal caress, and disappear beneath us. The air was rich with exotic fragrances, the palms and tree ferns unnecessarily huge and spreading, and the mountains disproportionately ponderous. Here, if ever, was the fountainhead of Oriental splendor. Truly, it was the domain of a great king.

It was dark when we reached the city. I made my way by inquiry to the address my Singhalese had given me, and found it to be a little two-room house beneath an enormous bo tree. The relative seemed genuinely honored to receive me, but his place smelled so of odors to which my nose was still sensitive that I remained only to pay my respects. I made the tour of the town, lingered beside the river, and at midnight found myself on a wooded hillock overlooking a lake.

I was in no condition to receive the beauty of Kandy. The tall trees threw gigantic shadows at my feet, and the palms and shrouded gutta trees that turned their drooping branches to the moon were transformed into cascades of shimmering loveliness. The river, stealing in and out among the shadows, was like a snake revealing its new skin to the noonday sun. Long after midnight, when the tinkle of bells had ceased, I became aware of the steady splashing of a distant waterfall.

The night was too eloquent of beauty to be real. The soft moonlight and the deep shadows conspired to make me think that it was all an illusion, that Kandy was like some ordinary woman who requires only a little love and the proper lighting to make her irresistibly beautiful. It was the first living moment I had known since steering the *Hyacinth* out of New York harbor over a month before, and I was out of my depth. I convinced myself that I did not want to be disillusioned the next morning by seeing a stack of ugly white buildings and a herd of middle-class Britishers in Kandy; and with that thought in mind I turned my back upon the city, and began to walk toward the divide in the great amphitheater.

I reached the top of the rim and looked back. A light twinkled in the blackness, just one. It winked as if it understood the truth that I tried not to acknowledge, and died. Then I walked down the other side and slept the night on a patch of grass overlooking the asphalt road.

A bus took me into Colombo the next day. I hastened to the quay, half-hoping that the *Hyacinth* would not be in the bay, yet worried lest she might be gone. She was still there, lying out by the breakwater like an old signboard stripped of its advertisement. The blue peter was at her masthead, smoke was pouring from her funnel, and

I knew that she was ready to sail. I jumped into the nearest of the boats, showed the Singhalese three rupees, and told him it was his if he reached the *Hyacinth* before she pulled out of the breakwater.

My escape from the ship in Colombo, the tenderness of the Singhalese merchant and the exquisite beauty of Kandy, seemed like a dream I might have had at the fo'-castle head one night. I wondered how long it would be until I could relax into such loveliness once more.

Chapter Six

LAST WHEEL

My escapade in Ceylon had livened things up aboard the *Hyacinth.* With the exception of the crew, and the captain, who was intensely preoccupied whenever we met, I was in deep water. The mate had lectured me fiercely and docked me two days' pay, and the bo'sun, my god and master, was in a perpetual state of hyper-infuriation. His lips compressed themselves into a white scar whenever we met. He gave me orders like sword thrusts; the words seemed to vibrate from his entire body, and his fingers and neck cords were eloquent in expressing certain phrases that were not in his orders. He gave me the hardest jobs on the ship, the dirtiest jobs he could dig up for an A. B.; and he put me at these jobs by myself and peered in occasionally to see that I did not shirk. The painting of the lowest deck in the forepeak, a little cubby-hole about the size of a packing box far below the water-line, was all mine. The air was mostly gas, and to paint the many angles of the den I had to crouch and lie on my side, and get covered with paint, soaked with thick white paint.

One particularly hot afternoon as we were sailing the Coromandel Coast for Madras, the bo'sun put me down in the engine room to shift scrap iron and coal. I liked hard work, and went at it with gusto, smashing my fingers and toes with boiler gratings and filling my lungs with the dust and soot that was almost black by the light of the cluster lamps. I could feel it going into my lungs

as I breathed. It was a keen experience, and I worked as if my life depended on it; but finally at one minute of two the bo'sun came down and told me to go to the wheel.

"You've only got a minute," he said.

I saw through his trick instantly. Invariably I had been called from my work at from ten to fifteen minutes of two and given time to wash and rest before going to the wheel. Now, after having exhausted my vitality near the engine room, he was taking out a little personal vengeance by ordering me direct to the bridge.

I went down to the fo'castle, washed thoroughly, changed to a clean shirt and dungarees, and went up to the wheel. It was twelve minutes past two. There are no moments more agonizing to the temper of a seaman than those he is compelled to stand at the wheel after his watch is up. My watchmate gave me a sinister look as I entered, repeated the course and walked out.

A few moments later, the second mate relieved me, and told me to go aft and oil the log. I met the bo'sun coming out of his cabin, fresh and pink after a good bath.

"You!" he bawled, "you didn't go to the wheel when I told you, did you?"

"Nope!" I replied. "I came down and washed up first. Just like you did," I added.

He burst into a barrage of profanity. It crackled and sizzled and flared like a bundle of firecrackers, and I was sure that his eyes and lips would melt into some gorgeous new expression that I could spring on the folks at home.

"You —— ——— ———," he choked. "When I say *wheel* you *go* to the wheel!" Words began to fail him. I went on oiling the log; and at last, with a hiss and a rumble, he slapped the towel across his shoulders and

went into his cabin. Never have I admired self-control more.

It was certainly a provocative incident; for that night at the fo'castle head, while the dolphins sported ahead of the bow like silk-hatted gentlemen, and the stars leaped from the heavens, I gave an oration on the subject. I placed my foot upon a coil of rope, and in the most eloquent of language, and with the most appropriate gestures, I pleaded my case before the captain and mate while the bo'sun stood by. Calling upon a white-cap to testify to the unwritten law of the seamen I asked if any man could conscientiously ask a fellow being to stand at the wheel in a perspiring, dizzy condition while a wind blew through the wheel-house. In the interests of the ship and for the safety of the ship, I declared, the command was ridiculous. How could one be expected to steer a true course when one's brain was stuffed with soot and rust and swam with the terrific heat of the engine room? The man who makes such requests should be put in irons! Nay, he should be thrown overboard!

"No, sir," I concluded, addressing myself respectfully to the captain, "if I am again asked by the bo'sun to go to the wheel at one minute of two I shall refuse. I think you will agree that I am in no way refusing duty, but in the interests of the ship and for the safety of all aboard her, standing for what is right and proper."

At this point the bo'sun grumbled to himself, gave me some stiletto looks and waddled aft. The captain clapped me on the shoulder, the mate shook my hand warmly; and I strolled aft to receive the congratulations of the crew.

But I was now so far apart from the crew that what they thought affected me like a story I might have been

I became absorbed in watching men and boys stretching wet hides over painted drums.

reading. Their attitude toward the sea was so wholly different from my own that they seemed no more than garbage thrown aboard to make things unpleasant. They had no love of life; and each port was but a step into the sink-hole of forgetfulness.

Thus, I worked on the ship, but I lived at the fo'castle head. There, the *Hyacinth* took wing in the glorious night and exulted in the dreams that are born with every ship. Her rust splotches fell away, her masts became golden, and, until dawn came, she was a royal old galleon revealing her ideals to the moaning wind and the sympathetic night. When she lurched into the trough of a sea I grasped her rail; when she plunged headlong into a wave I crouched behind her bulwarks. I could not hate her; and, like her, I knew that it was petty to condemn anything aboard. Standing at her fo'castle head I could only look onward, and up, silent before the magnificence of the night.

Madras, however, was an appropriate outlet for all the venom that the three-day voyage from Colombo had created. Now that we were nearing the end of my pilgrimage I could not keep my feet still, and no sooner had we tied up at the dock than I was over her side, determined to lose myself in the city. I slushed through the miserable water-front district where the natives lived upon the filth of a hundred generations in little mud houses together with their goats and cattle. Here, women and children existed in a sweltering stew of mud and filth, laughed from the entrances of huts scarcely high enough to sit upright in, and cooked the pickings of the streets in empty tin cans. Their happiness under such sordid conditions lightened my own heart, and as I went through the bazars the sight of cheery brown faces squat-

ting over leather slippers and the comforting rumble of a buffalo cart drove the last thoughts of the *Hyacinth* from my mind. I became absorbed in watching women balancing baskets, the thump of an Indian drum, men and boys stretching wet hides over painted drums, piles of fly-covered dates and candies, flashing tinware, gaudy calicoes, and two fat Chinese riding in a flimsy rickshaw. I crossed the trolley tracks, passed the restaurants, bicycle shops, clock shops, electric-light and shade shops. The bazars thinned out to an occasional liquor joint, and the honeycomb of residences began.

I tried to lose myself in the labyrinth of alleys and streets. I entered courts, passed through the hallways of houses; the alleys led me into walled yards, and I climbed over them to keep on going. Women grinding flour stared at me as I, not knowing whether I were in a private place or in a public court, passed by. Beautiful girls with silver and gold in their ears and noses, and massive silver bangles hanging loosely on their wrists and ankles, smiled sweetly. And at length I wandered near a public coal yard where I sat down upon a curbstone, near some women who were drawing water from a well. A rickshaw man trotted over to see if I wanted a ride. I told him no, and offered him a cigarette.

"Sailor man," he grinned, "is very funny. He spend all his money for drink. Captain, *burra-sahib,* sailor, all the same; all spend many rupees for drink. Why he do that?"

"I guess they like it," I replied.

"No like it!" he smiled. "He shake his head when he drink. Then he drink one glass beer. After he drink too much he hit this man with him. One man go in my rickshaw, this other man go on my back and hit me and

say me go like hell. What I can do? I go like hell to the ship. When he see the ship he swear and say I am goddam fool, and he tell me go back. This time I go to bad woman house, and he kick me and give me no money, and say goddam, goddam. Captain, *burra-sahib,* sailor, all one man." He shrugged his shoulders and looked at me inquiringly.

"Well, maybe it makes them happy," I suggested aimlessly.

He grinned still, but made a gesture. "Big *burra-sahib* Englishman same like sailorman. One time he kill him," he said, pointing his forefinger to his temple.

"Killed himself? Here in Madras?"

"Yes . . . one time he do that. Not happy, eh?" he inquired.

"Well, are you?" I asked.

He rolled his eyes upward, and his teeth flashed in a smile. "Ah, so happy!" he sighed warmly. "Two children, one wife. I send one *chotta* boy to school. I pay four annas one month. I work all day, sun to sun. Now all the motors and trams come to Madras, and I must run all day to make eight annas. Sometime I work all night for sailorman and he give me goddam."

As evening drew on, he said that he would go home to supper, and urged me to come and take *khana* with him. He suggested that I hop in his rickshaw and he would ride me; but I would do no such thing, so we walked side by side through the lighted streets toward the darkest and most miserable part of Madras.

At a low and dimly lighted group of houses such as will shelter the millions of India for years to come, he stood his rickshaw on end and called out in Hindustani. Then he lifted aside a strip of gunny sacking and bade

me enter. There seemed to be several families occupying the one room, and I soon saw this to be true, for we sat at one side near a single bunk, which, he explained, was his. The rest of the room was occupied by three other families. His wife and children were extremely timid when I first entered, but after he had explained everything to her she smiled, and the children gazed with wide eyes into my face. He alone spoke English, his quick ear having picked it up in his trade.

Our meal was boiled rice and curry sauce. We ate it with our fingers and, although it was unbelievably hot, I tried to enjoy it. We talked all through the meal, after which I produced cigarettes; and he, his wife and I had a smoke. She allowed the smoke to curl about her nostrils in a most alluring fashion, and altogether handled the cigarette with so much grace of manner that I could not but compare her with the women of our country, some of whom devour cigarettes with a predatory violence. At length I pressed some rupees into the hands of the children, paid my deep gratitude to my host and left, feeling that I had touched the pulse of India, and promising to visit them again should I ever chance to be in Madras another time.

Then I walked serenely back toward the ship, giving alms to every child who accosted me, and with a kindly feeling for every person I met.

The six days that it took to sail up the Bay of Bengal passed swiftly, and when once I had sighted the mouth of the Hugli River the *Hyacinth* was forgotten. The water, the sky and the jungle were green. The low swamp land faded from a translucent green in the foreground to a deep green of matted foliage and swaying

cocoanut-palms. The sky absorbed this green, and the muddy river reflected it; nowhere was there any color save green.

On up the river we swung, in mighty, full-shouldered curves. Far off, a piece of clay bank fell away, and disappeared noiselessly into the river. Our engines replied with a monotonous clanking, the yellow water swirled around us and folded itself in our wake with the grace of a swallow. High-pooped native craft of bamboo and lateen sails appeared ahead—boats that were a wreath of curves below and a mass of bamboo spindles above. We came closer, and I saw that old clothes, gunny-sacks, pieces of tin, strips of driftwood—anything that could be attached to something else—were fastened to the floating home to enlarge it, to keep off the rain and to help it float. Along the banks were families of Hindus fishing with little hand nets. Behind them were sprawling, thatched huts, a few cattle.

Jungle again, jungle thick and low; and for miles not a boat or a bungalow to be seen. Then, suddenly, in a lagoon was a town, old and splotched, and all but buried in the mud. From its midst, a temple of marvelously intricate workmanship stood out like the silver heirloom of a destitute family.

I glanced aft to see a string of vessels following us with the precision of elephants. The bows of others poked around the bends, and ahead were the sterns of ships which preceded us. The smoke of countless others arose far to the right, where the river would eventually lead us.

We were getting near Calcutta. The river craft were thicker, towns were closer together, and the masts of sunken ships protruded from the water near the shore.

We were nearing Calcutta, for the smoke of factories darkened the sky, the river banks were lined with cargo vessels, and swarms of tiny people moved over the land. Calcutta took hold, grew, thicker and taller, blacker and greener and more swarming. Ugly smoke-stacks and foundries flanked us, we were beset by native craft so close together that I could have walked ashore without wetting my feet.

Our whistle sounded. The teeming black mass of life that covered the river began to crack and move. Bronzed shoulders and white teeth flashed in the sun, long-sweep oars began to stir, long rows of standing Hindus rowed in unison like Egyptian galley slaves, and in ten minutes a channel was cleared, and we steamed through to our moorings beside the Calcutta docks.

The port doctor came aboard and examined my injury. Only a long rest and proper treatment, he said, could cure me. So with my sea bag filled, and the blessings of the captain and the bo'sun upon my head, I took my leave of the *Hyacinth* and went to the Howrah Hospital. My plans had worked beautifully.

Chapter Seven

RETRIBUTION

"A MAN-EATING tiger is reported in the vicinity of Diamond Harbor. The animal is reported to be an unusually large one, and the natives believe it to be the same beast that terrorized the Jaynagar district two months ago."

I threw down the morning paper and stared out the window of the Seamen's Mission. Tiger, and not sixty miles from Calcutta! A man-eater with long yellow fangs and a mangy hide! Here, on the first day after leaving the hospital was the opportunity I had been awaiting for two months!

Although still feeling the effects of my injury I could not stay in the hospital a day after the *Hyacinth* had sailed. There was too much to see, too much to do; and since I had persuaded the doctor to discharge me, the ship's agents were keeping me at the Seamen's Mission until another homeward-bound ship arrived in Calcutta. It had been a close escape from returning on the *Hyacinth,* but it was according to my plans. And now that there was the prospect of a tiger hunt before me I knew that every moment I had spent on the ship was going to be paid up in full.

And a further joy was to realize that Diamond Harbor was at the Ganges Delta. During my sixteen days in the hospital I had pored over maps of Lower Bengal, tracing out the inlets and lagoons of the Sundarbans. A British sailor had told me that these islands were in-

habited by Royal Bengal tigers, wild buffalo and tribes of half-wild Hindus. I had decided to explore them the moment I left the hospital; on the first day was news of a tiger come out of them!

To settle matters, I bought a gun immediately; after which I was so absolutely certain that I *would* get a tiger that I went around to all the furriers and curio shops, asking how much they charged to cure and mount a tiger skin, with the head in full, with the head flat; how I should prepare it for shipment; and if I got three tigers how much apiece could I get for them? I calculated finally, that, what with selling the teeth and claws to the Hindu medicine-men, the fat to the Chinese, and the hide to the furrier, my trip would cost me nothing. How fine it would be, I thought, if I could get a job hunting tigers for the Government!

The problem of chartering a dhow bewildered me for a time, but with the aid of a chance acquaintance, one Estoofally Doorbhoy, who spoke Hindustani and English with equal facility, I succeeded in hiring a dhow, its owner and the owner's son. Estoofally explained to them the purpose of my trip; and with the little craft provisioned for a period of three weeks we wriggled into the roily current of the Hugli.

I stayed inside the little rotan cabin until we had passed the ships moored along the river bank, and were well past the outskirts of the city. Even then, I ducked back under cover when a power-boat came in sight, for fear that some white man aboard might see me and make inquiries at Calcutta. It is not a common thing for a European to be drifting down toward the Bay of Bengal in a native boat; and, as every white man in the Orient is numbered and registered with the police, questions

might be asked. I wanted nothing to interfere with my adventure, so kept on the safe side.

But it was not uncomfortable within. The cabin was fully ten feet long, high enough to sit upright in, and open at both ends to the fresh river breezes. A clean rotan mat covered the bottom, and there was plenty of room for the three of us to sleep, without crowding. A little clay stove was aft. Forward was a mast for a sail. I could not have wished for anything more perfect.

That night, we stopped at a little village just above the bend from Diamond Harbor; and a subtle singing in my ear reminded me that I had forgotten to bring along mosquito-netting. Here we were, in a land of swamps, headed toward a vast series of lagoons full of malaria and dengue fever, and I hadn't a square inch of mosquito-netting.

For the first half-hour I was naive enough to think I could eventually kill them off; so I lay quietly, intending to decoy them to my body and whack them to death. But a thousand times worse than a mosquito that bites is one that sings and refuses to alight.

Suddenly I became philosophical. Mohammed did not seem to mind their buzzing. I, too, would lie down calmly and ignore them. Ah, pity that there are not more philosophers like Mohammed! Within a few moments I was almost eaten alive. They were tiny things, so small that they buzzed inside my ears, and were drawn into my nostrils with each breath. An immense swarm of them attacked me; they were driving me mad, and I was about to jump into the water when Mohammed's little son motioned me to hold out for a moment longer. He went ashore and began to tear off a corner of one of the huts. Then he built up the fire, laid on pieces of the

hut, and moored the boat so that the smoke drifted through the cabin. Cow dung may not have an agreeable odor, but it certainly drives away mosquitoes.

We passed Diamond Harbor the next day, and the sun was setting just as we reached the channel between Saugor Island and the mainland of Bengal. We were at the edge of the Sundarbans, and I was glad I had come on instead of pottering around Diamond Harbor just because a tiger had been seen there. In the bay behind us were a few ships, suggestive of the *Hyacinth*; to the east were islands, scores of them, clustered like flies at the mouth of the Ganges. They were low, wild, steaming with vegetation and inhabited by snake-charming Hindus, tigers and buffalo. They had never been fully explored by any white man!

We moored the craft about thirty feet from shore and settled for the night. Why thirty feet from shore? Why, there are tigers on Saugor! The island is alive with them! We were already in the tiger country!

Yet, at the time, I do not believe that I was properly excited, for it seemed impossible that within two days of Calcutta I could be in any danger of being mauled by a tiger. In spite of the fact that tigers had been killed between us and Calcutta I finally dropped off to sleep, awaking now and then during the night to wonder if I actually would have a chance to use my old double-barreled gun against one. How different, I thought, from being awakened for my watch at the wheel!

We were two days in getting past Saugor; many days in getting into the heart of the Sundarbans. Strong tides and a southeast wind confronted us all the way, and often we were forced to wait until an early morning when the sea was calm before we could reach the lee of

the next island. We followed estuaries that led us into blind lagoons, and circled back only to run into rough expanses of ocean.

The islands were all so low that it was hard to tell where the shore-lines began. Some of them had glittering white beaches on the ocean side, and a back yard of mangrove swamp to leeward. All of them, washed by the fresh breezes of the Indian Ocean, were exquisite havens of seclusion, and seemed to promise all that I hoped to find. But I felt that my expedition into the Sundarbans could not begin properly until we had traveled among them for at least eight or ten days,—until I was lost to memories of civilization and the *Hyacinth*,—so, with bad Hindustani and many gestures, I kept telling Mohammed to keep on toward the east, straight into the path of the morning sun.

On the tenth day from Calcutta we approached an island so large that I could not determine its limit in any direction; an island such as I had dreamed of being wrecked upon a thousand times between Karachi and Calcutta. Immense cocoanut-palms, as tall as those of Ceylon, fringed its edge, and, although the jungle overgrew the island into the sea, there were intermittent spots of white that I knew to be sand. The foliage, too, sloped gently back over a rise of earth, and for the first time since leaving Kandy I looked upon a hill. Not a high one, but, nevertheless, a bit of earth one could stand upon free of sharks in case of a flood tide. I looked upon the island as I had looked upon the valley of the Kandian kings, and hoped that nothing would happen to shatter its perfection in my eyes.

A few moments later I was surprised to see two small boats ahead of us, and to realize, as the distance between

us kept increasing instead of decreasing, that they were fleeing toward the shore. Now and then a paddle flashed in the sun; sometimes they were lost to view entirely between the tops of the waves.

We found, upon landing, that they were no more than canoes of hollowed logs. Mohammed hallooed, but no one answered. I suspected that the natives were the half-wild Hindus I had heard about in the Howrah Hospital, and was determined to see them. A narrow trail led back into the jungle, so without the slightest hesitation I took up my shotgun and followed it.

I walked noisily, whistling as I went, as if to destroy any suspicion of hostility that hiding natives might have. I was too supremely happy to entertain thoughts of danger to myself; my whole object was to assure them that I was of a friendly heart, and wanted to know them as an equal. So I whistled on, and eventually came to a group of thatched huts in a clearing. A glance inside told that they had been hastily deserted, for fires were still smoking and several baskets of fish lay uncovered.

Like Mohammed, I hallooed; but there was no answer. As I could not say anything appropriate in Hindustani, I looked in my book and found a ready-made phrase which read: "I am sorry to trouble you so much." So I called out in Hindustani, "*Afsos hai ki nain ap-ko itni taklif nahin.*" Then, feeling that I was being closely observed from the foliage, I began to act as if I wished to impress my observers with my good will. I laid my gun on the ground and walked in a large circle around it, facing the jungle and opening my hands to show that I concealed no weapons. Receiving no response I took all the extra cartridges from my pocket and laid them beside the gun. I squatted down and lighted a cigarette.

I had almost finished the smoke, and was about to arise, when I heard footsteps behind me. The steps came closer; I laughed, and waved my hand, urging them to hurry up and stand before me. Finally a shadow appeared at my right, and I glanced around to see a tall native with long black hair eying me suspiciously. Behind him was a half-circle of timid-looking savages, all of them between me and my gun.

Cigarettes, I thought, would be a better peace-maker than bad Hindustani, so I took out a package of Capstans and held them out. The men grinned at one another like choir-boys. One of them stepped forward and took a cigarette. Another followed his example. Within thirty seconds my whole package was exhausted, and the wild Hindus stood around me grinning, like cannibals with stiff collars on.

Feeling very much elated with my peaceful conquest I lighted their cigarettes, picked up my gun and motioned them to follow me. They followed, and I went back to the boat with a file of naked, cigarette-smoking savages trailing along behind me. In spite of my desire to forget the past, I could not help wondering what the bo'sun would have done had he seen me.

Now that I was actually in the heart of the tiger country I was at a loss for ideas to find one. The sudden change from the fo'castle of a merchant ship to the center of an unexplored group of islands in the Indian Ocean bewildered me more than I cared to admit, and the opportunity of actually finding a tiger, actually seeing one and having an opportunity to shoot it, seemed even more remote than it had been when I lay in the Howrah Hospital. In America, I had never thought twice about going out to shoot any game that the woods afforded;

but here, in India, I felt that hunting would be different; that the entire problem of tiger shooting should be approached from an Indian angle. Once so confident that I could arrange a hunt by myself, I began to look upon Mohammed as the leader, and wished that Estoofally Doorhboy had explained to him even more about the purpose of my visit.

But Mohammed was resourceful. True to his Moslem nature, he began to serve me faithfully, for that evening as he talked with the natives, they glanced at me approvingly; and finally, one of them burst into a babble of Bengali. I caught the word "tiger" now and then, but could not understand the significance of their gestures until Mohammed, after much difficulty, explained that one of the natives had been killed by a tiger. Try as I did, however, I was unable to discover where the death had occurred or how long ago. Choice phrases from my Hindustani book brought forth only endless concatenations of chatter that I could not understand.

Mohammed had certainly given me a good boost, for, as if to make up for their inability to make me understand them, two of the men went into the huts and returned with several rotan baskets and a small drum. They set these four baskets in a half-circle just within the flicker of the firelight, and an old man with a drum and an instrument made of reeds and a small gourd squatted about three feet in front of them. He lifted the top of a basket with a stick; a thick black head sprang up, and began to dance about, like a bit of cork on water. The old man patted the drum softly with his left hand, played a few notes on the gourd instrument, and the snake rose fully two feet out of the basket. He turned back the tops of the other baskets, playing and drumming the

while, and from each of them a snake appeared, swaying to the intoxication of the weird music.

I had seen snakes charmed by flute music in Bombay, but here, on an almost unknown island at the mouth of the Ganges, with a crowd of half-wild Hindus around me, white eyes glistening in the firelight, and a smoky moon overhead, snake-charming fulfilled all the illusions I had ever entertained about it. Four of them, oily black, swayed together like the arms of dying men. Now a beady eye was revealed by the firelight; now a length of scaly body contracted and expanded with its breathing. And all around me were men whose souls had been captured by these snakes. Although they had seen this sight a thousand times, they were more a part of it than I, who could feel only the fascination of their untiring grace, and try to understand the mind of a man who could be hypnotized by such an exhibition.

That night, however, I dreamed of nothing but sinuous black forms that waved around me like roots under water; eyes that flashed venom, and white fangs that protracted torture into a lingering death. These dreams were only overpowered and driven from my mind by swarms of Royal Bengal tigers leaping through the air at me to fall writhing to the ground before my gun.

The next morning Mohammed, his son and myself were sailing up the coast of the island behind two canoe-loads of natives. In view of the excitement and talk of the previous night, and Mohammed's persistent mutterings of "*Bagh, Sahib! Bagh!*" (Tiger, sir! Tiger!) I asked no questions, knowing that we were actually going to where a tiger had been seen.

Remembering the head of a thirteen-foot tiger skin I had seen in Calcutta, I wondered if Mohammed knew

how nervous I was. The teeth in that head were as long as my fingers; the head itself was as large as a bushel basket. How ridiculous to expect to kill such a beast with a piece of lead no larger than a gum-drop! Yet ahead of me were six natives, confident that the white Sahib could kill a tiger. Behind me was Mohammed, who had presented me to them as a tiger killer; and I had never in my life shot anything larger than a timber wolf. I sat in the stern with the shotgun across my knees, wondering if I could do better on this new venture than I had steered the *Hyacinth* out of New York harbor. I scrutinized the foliage enclosing the lagoons, hoping that I would see some large animal, something that would make the real test less of a shock.

But there was nothing to see, nothing to hear. The labyrinths through which we sailed were flanked by impenetrable hedges of greenery. Although I knew the waters swarmed with crocodiles I could see none; the overhanging trees were festooned with lianas and interlacing vines for the delight of bright birds, yet there was not a bird to be seen. But for the flashing of the six paddles ahead of us, the islands were frozen into silence; and were there a dozen tigers crouching along the banks I would have been none the wiser.

At length the natives stopped paddling, stepped out and began to wade through the mud and water, drawing their canoes with them to the solid earth. We followed them in single file through some tall grass to a part of the jungle where the trees were very high, and where the ground beneath was sunless, and almost devoid of undergrowth. Here they stopped and spoke to Mohammed, who tried to interpret for me. By word and gesture he tried desperately to tell me something about a tiger.

I examined the earth, but could see no pug marks. Immediately, realizing that I had not understood, one of the natives growled and snarled at a comrade, and leaped at him to show me that it was here, in this spot, that a tiger had killed a man. I asked where the dead man was. Mohammed replied, "Gone . . . finish;" and the natives, to emphasize his words, pointed down their throats and waved their arms toward the jungle to indicate that the man had been carried off and eaten by the beast.

It was impossible for me to find out how long ago the disaster had occurred, and I felt that it was useless to try to beat up the jungle. The natives, in the belief that I could handle the situation completely, made no effort to suggest a course of action. Under the circumstances I decided to bait the tiger, and through Mohammed I made them understand that if I had a live goat or a cow, I could lure the tiger back again and shoot it from a tree.

They were delighted. For fifteen rupees they would bring me a live goat. I turned over the money, and they started back toward the village with every indication that they would return immediately.

For the first time in my life I was in the jungle; almost alone, for Mohammed and his son, squatted between the buttresses of a great tree, were overshadowed and completely absorbed by the silence. I crept closer to them, afraid to speak above a whisper. The air was of such a quality that I was not conscious of breathing. To my eyes, the air-roots, suspended from the sunlight a hundred feet above, were like black lines upon a background of painted scenery. The vast columned gloom seemed like a mortuary designed for kings centuries ago, and I felt it a sacrilege to touch a tree or even a

leaf. I sat open-mouthed, as if to concentrate all of my five senses upon some mysterious medium which would reveal its life.

Once I followed Mohammed's upward glance to see a huge bird flap through a shaft of sunlight and disappear. I gripped the gun, wondering if a tiger could creep upon us with equal stealth. I selected the tree from which I would shoot the tiger, and visioned over and over again the marvelous picture he would make, stealing upon the live goat in the ghostly recesses of moonlight and black shadows, the thunderous echo of his roar, and the silence that would follow. At any moment the natives would return, and we would begin to prepare the trap for the man-eater.

We waited for them until almost sundown, but they did not return. When we reached the dhow it was too late to start back for the village. A sharp wind was blowing through the estuary, and to find a sheltered place for the night, we sailed into a lagoon just around the point from our rendezvous. I was not so grievously disappointed as one might imagine, for the delay was giving me a grateful interval in which to adjust myself to the strange environment. When they returned upon the morrow I would be more eager to sit out the night in the crotch of a tree, waiting for the tiger.

After the usual meal of rice, dried fish and tea, we built up the mosquito smudge of cow dung, moored the dhow offshore and lay down to sleep. I was awakened several times during the night by the mosquitoes, and finally sat up to discover that the wind had shifted, pivoting us around toward the shore on our mooring line. The smudge drifted off the stern and there seemed nothing to do but lie down again and endure the pests.

But instinctively I sat very quietly, hearing nothing but the buzzing of the night insects and the staccato crescendo of the cicadas. I felt for my gun, not to take it up, but merely because my hand reached for it unconsciously. I was looking at the shore, and I felt, at length, that I was being watched.

It was not the common impression that thousands upon thousands of unseen eyes were watching me from the foliage, but a growing assurance that two and only two eyes were staring at me, and that I was very close to danger. I laid the gun across my knee and placed two more cartridges on the mat beside me. With my neck cords tightening with a rigidity that only such a fear can cause, I stared intently into the blackness ashore. My eyes and my imagination described a figure that made my heart hammer against my ribs like a riveting gun. Suddenly the moon came out, and I saw the head and shoulders of an enormous tiger crouched at the water's edge.

I was chilled with fright. The gun seemed no larger and of no more use than a burned match; the eighteen-odd feet between me and that massive head shrank to a face-to-face meeting; and the eyes, which now glowed in ever enlarging circles, held a hypnotism that turned me into an agony of rigid flesh. I might have awakened Mohammed. I might have cut the mooring rope and pushed out into the lagoon; but I was too frightened to release a muscle; frightened lest the tiger, in one tremendous leap, should fall upon the dhow and rip me to pieces.

It seemed hours before my courage returned. My fingers tightened upon the gun, my forefinger felt the trigger. Suddenly I became as cool and steady as if I

were about to shoot a rabbit. I cocked both hammers noiselessly, drew a bead and fired between the two eyes.

A tremendous roar and splash stunned me. Automatically I had reloaded, and I again emptied both barrels into the frenzied mass of boiling water and roaring tiger. You have no idea of the terror in a tiger's roar. It drags the blood from one's veins by the quart, and seems to dislocate every bone in one's body. It is volcanic, immense, and utterly devastating to all that lives. It was the roar of a tiger, I am convinced, that announced the creation of Hell. Before I could reload a third time he had disappeared into the darkness with long crashing bounds and I was left quivering with hair-trigger excitement.

"Quick, Mohammed!" I yelled, pulling upon the rope and reaching for an oar.

"Né, Sahib, né!" cried Mohammed. *"Achcha né!"* His son was too terrified to speak, and I realized it was utter madness to try to follow the tiger at night. He might be a mile off by now; and he might be a hundred yards away, groaning, waiting.

It was impossible to sleep the rest of the night. We sat up trying to talk to one another in excited whispers, talking in Bengali, English, Hindustani, understanding nothing either of us said, but compelled to express ourselves in voice. Over and over again Mohammed muttered, "Allah . . . Allah!" and raised his hands in a blessing over me. Every gesture, every word he spoke, told me that Allah had saved my life.

We went ashore with the dawn. Deep imprints in the mud as large as the palm of my hand showed where he had crouched; the muck near the bank was raked away in two long slashes. But although we followed the prints in-

to the jungle for a good hundred yards there was not a sign of blood. In the light of reason, after having experienced the startling reality of a tiger leaping at me through the air, I feared to penetrate farther. Mohammed, who was but a step behind me, cautioned me with unmistakable gestures that it would be suicide to do so. The six natives might arrive at any moment; with their knowledge of the jungle and the ways of tigers, we could find him quicker and without so much unnecessary danger.

Noon came, but still the natives did not arrive. I could have wrung their procrastinating Oriental necks, for as we started back to get them a head wind blew up which kept us from reaching the village until late afternoon. Then it was too late to return, and the natives were in such a high state of excitement over the news that it was useless to reprimand or ask questions. They sang and yelled and beat their drums; they hung garlands of sticky vines around my shoulders, and even the women and girls were allowed to come out and fête me. Bonfires were built, and although the celebration continued far into the night, I was too much worried over the fate of my tiger to enjoy it to the full.

We arrived at the lagoon the next morning with nine men, all of them loaded down with spears and drums. They spread out fanwise and began to advance through the jungle, thumping their drums, striking trees, and making hideous noises with their mouths in an effort to scare up the tiger. We came upon pug marks, and at length saw where he had lain down; but his trail was eventually lost in a rise of dense foliage and we were forced to pursue our beating tactics once more.

Toward noon it became unbearably hot. Eager as I was to find my tiger, I was obliged to stop at every pool

of water to bathe my head and neck. We went through swamps of tall grass that steamed with heat, and cut like knives; through growths of foliage that were so thick we could not see more than a dozen feet ahead; always beating the drums and yelling to drive the beast up.

I was becoming hopelessly despondent, cursing myself for not having gone in the previous morning without the natives, and wondering if it might not be a good idea to circle back, when my nostrils caught a rank foul odor. Inquisitive as to what it might be, I located the odor again on the wind, and followed it up. Twenty feet more and it was unbearable. I stepped back and edged toward a near-by thicket to see my tiger stretched out like an overturned statue, and too large to be normal.

He was not a beautiful animal to see. My first two shots had struck him squarely in the face, and the second two had entered his left thigh. He apparently had died shortly after I had hit him, for two days of Indian heat had transformed him into food for the vultures. My visions of a Royal Bengal tiger skin filling my bedroom at home went up in heat waves. I was sick with disappointment, walked away and called the natives. But they would not come. To see the monarch of the jungle lifeless at their feet was more than native humor could bear. They pulled his tail, called him names, jabbed him with spears and threw handfuls of mud at his face. They beat their drums and danced around him yelling and singing until I could stand the noise and odor no longer, and was forced to move away. Then, after they had relieved their spirits by insulting the dead tiger, they began to cut him up, laughing as they worked, and wiping their bloody hands on their thighs. Finally they extracted a kind of

hard, white, cartilaginous substance; and with this trophy* they returned to the village.

The next day a monsoon blew out of the Bay of Bengal. The rain, borne by a high wind, came down in torrents, and the waves rolled into the islands as if they were mud-flats. It was impossible to keep dry, and the three of us, huddled under our little cabin, shivered within the pitiful shelter of a lagoon. Out in the bays, waves too large for our little craft rolled in from the ocean.

Mohammed said that the monsoon was on for good, and that it would be impossible to stay round the islands any longer. I fully agreed with him. We waited two days for weather calm enough to cross the bay, and, after an exceedingly rough and rainy voyage of twelve days' duration, crept up the Hugli toward Calcutta.

*I later discovered that this "trophy" is highly valued by the natives as a medical property, and is sold to the Indian apothecary shops in Calcutta. A good deal of its value, it seems, is grounded in superstition.

Chapter Eight

THE CAULDRON

There was something astir in Calcutta. The river, between us and the Howrah Bridge, was a restless, moving jam of native craft. Sailors crowded to the bows of the merchant vessels, and scores of natives hurried along the banks. All the boats and men converged toward a disturbance at one side. Suddenly came a high piercing wail which mystified me more than ever.

"Mohammed, what's the trouble?" I asked.

He shook his head, made a gesture of ignorance and began to scull our craft rapidly away from the milling river traffic. His son said some excited words which I could not catch, picked up a sweep and hurried us toward the shore.

At length the river began to change from black boats and spars to a field of rippling white. Up the river as far as I could see, white-robed figures began to arise like daisies turned in the wind. From the immediate foreground to the vague outline of Howrah Bridge, Moslems covered the Hugli to its banks, and before I could recall enough Hindustani to question Mohammed again a second shrill voice called. The field of white sank to a vista of bended backs; thousands upon thousands of Moslems were kneeling to pray. They arose, knelt and bent again; arose and stood like marble statues, as the voice from nowhere continued to guide them. Along the banks people were hurrying in struggling crowds; little outbursts of humanity boiled up and down far ahead.

"Mohammed!" I cried again, "what is it? A fight? A fiesta?"

Mohammed moored the dhow and shoved the sweeps into the cabin. "War!" he replied hastily. "Hindu and Mohammedan make war, Sahib! This Moslem," pointing to the pebbled mass of white robes, "pray to kill Hindu!"

I paid Mohammed, gave him a tip at which he almost wept, and hurried back toward the Seamen's Mission. A procession was coming down Garden Reach Road. It filled the entire street with blazing torches, glittering tinsel superstructures, and singing, half-crazy natives. From the alleys and houses men and women joined it like rats before a flood, leaping in ahead, running alongside, and trying to find places beneath the towering pyramids of white and red paper. In the van, a squadron of priests marched with a solemn dignity, but behind them, bells clanged, drums beat, and frenzied Hindus dashed about like red Indians, brandishing sticks, knives and iron crowbars.

There was no telling what might happen, so I kept to the shelter of the bazars, making myself as inconspicuous as possible. The bow of the procession passed me, and just as the wave-wash of fanatical Hindus began to roll down upon the bazars I heard the roar of heavy motors and the imperial chattering of a machine-gun. In a blaze of lights and dust, a British tank charged through the procession spitting lead into the air; and behind it came a squadron of red-turbaned Sepoys and mounted British soldiers. They went down the street like a broom, and in less time than it takes to tell about it the towers disappeared, the Hindus vanished and Garden Reach Road was clear.

There was no time to lose. The religious fanaticism of India was rising to its peak, and I knew that, if I did not reach the center of the Moslem quarter immediately, I might miss the entire show. The tram-cars were still running, and I took one over to the corner of Lower Chitpur and Harrison Road, to find a heavy guard of British Tommies surrounding the Jain Temple. A few mounted soldiers and a scattering of Sepoys patrolled the streets. The honeycomb of buildings along Harrison Road was without life; the bazars were closed, and the natives who appeared in the streets walked only a few steps to disappear into alleys and doorways. The Moslem quarter seemed deserted, but there was a tension behind the silence that kept me on edge, as if I were walking over the crust of a volcano.

The silence became oppressive. I turned down an alley to see if I could discover a sign of activity, and I was about to proceed still farther when a crescendo of shouts, bells and clanging brass brought me to the street once more. Advancing down Harrison Road under an escort of British soldiers came a magnificent Hindu procession.

Only the vision of prophets could have conceived the wealth of its imagery. It poured down the street like the overflow of a hundred circuses, seething with the richest interpretation of religious mythology that India could offer. Priests and standard-bearers advanced in an impressive wedge of brass and tinsel, but they were insignificant before the heavy roll of elephants, the sway of howdahs and towers, the dance of pennants, and the shimmer and surge of emotional faces and legs that threatened to overroll them. I had come ten thousand miles to see India, I had visioned the grandeur of India

since childhood; but here, the smoldering religious mania of a thousand years was being flung at me in a barbaric pageantry that overwhelmed my senses. It seemed incredible that Calcutta, after centuries of European influence, could be the scene of such magnificence.

The procession, I could see, was in honor of some Hindu deity, and it seemed to be moving toward the bathing ghat at the sacred waters of the Hugli. The soldiers, bobbing up and down along the side, were keeping it in good order; but as it reached a small, a ridiculously small mosque not a hundred yards from the river, the pent-up religious antagonism of twelve months broke loose. Knowing that the Moslems were at prayer within the mosque, the Hindus clanged bells, beat cymbals and shrieked derisive epithets at the entire Mohammedan world in a mad callithumpian concert. The honeycomb of buildings, once so deserted, came to life with a vengeance. The alleys belched *kurti*-clad demons. Moslems armed with sticks and iron bars swarmed upon the procession from the doorways and side-streets; and above the tumult came the Mohammedan war-cry of faithful hearts defending the honor of their prophet.

I scarcely knew where I was or what to do. At first I had been in sympathy with the Hindus; now I leaned toward the cause of the Moslems. But before the great spectacle of seeing the undercurrent of India's religious convictions being forced to the surface by contact of opposing views I could do nothing but wonder. From the second story of a building, Harrison Road, even to the banks of the Hugli, looked like the deck of a Chinese junk boarded by pirates. Cutlasses were flashing, men were struggling and falling in groups; and towers were crashing to the dust. The Moslems swept through the

procession like sharks, cutting, striking, running to strike and run again. The elephants became unmanageable; with their howdahs empty and with trappings flapping heavily against their sides, they lurched out of sight.

I had lost track of the soldiers, but with the cracking of machine-gun fire and the thunder of tanks they came into view once more. Little by little the fighting quieted down. A half-hour later ambulances were carrying the dead and wounded to the hospital.

Calcutta was quiet the next day. The bazars were open and business went on as usual. Moslems and Hindus who might have killed one another twelve hours before mingled freely in the streets, and, except for a few ruined shops and the débris cluttering the streets, there was nothing to indicate the furious religious conflict of the previous day. Although the natives appeared to be quiet and in perfect harmony the city was patrolled by soldiers, and the Calcutta *Statesmen* warned all Europeans to keep out of the streets, as a fresh riot might break out at any moment.

Because of my nationality I was unable to get a job as special police sergeant for the duration of the riot period, so I compromised by disguising myself as one in a pair of khaki shorts and a brown sun topi, and going the rounds of the bazars, hoping to find a riot just large enough for one man's authority to quell. Eventually, in a little coffee-shop, a young Bengali challenged my disguise and I told him that I was merely a civilian looking for excitement.

"Excitement!" he cried. "You should come with me to-night for excitement."

"A riot?" I asked.

"A religious party!" he laughed. "It's a Bengali revival of faith!"

"But where is it to be?"

"Out in the jungle. But if you go, you mustn't dress like that! They would never allow you to come near. You must put on *dhotie* like mine, and blacken your face. Then you will have a good time!" He laughed merrily at the idea. He didn't seem to take his religion very seriously. In fact, he spoke as if the revival were to be a kind of frolic.

"Will we be attacked?"

"Perhaps," he replied whimsically. "Who can tell? The Mohammedans are very angry because we disturbed their prayers yesterday."

At his home I changed my khaki shorts for a strip of white cloth which he wrapped around me like a skirt, and fastened in a bunch at my stomach. My face he smeared with ghee and soot, chuckling like a madman. Then, with a single collar button at my neck in place of a collar and tie, and an old blue coat, I was dressed as a Bengali.

I wondered how I could ever hope to spend an evening among Bengalis without being detected; but my companion did not seem to be concerned with such possibilities, and, after having seen the riots, any means of coming in contact with the more beautiful side of the Hindu religion would have appealed to me.

That evening we took a tram-car out to Behala, and began to walk down a road leading into a farm country interspersed with patches of jungle. In the moonlight I could see groups of men walking ahead of us. We followed them down a side road, across a mucky field, and into a dense black growth of jungle. Walking very slowly, feeling our way, we came to an immense clearing, enclosed on three sides by massive stone buildings, which were overhung by the tops of trees. Tiny lights, flicker-

ing at regular intervals around the enclosure, revealed the entrances to small rooms; and a moment later I saw that what I had thought to be a solid enclosure was really a series of separate temples, each lighted by a sacrificial taper. At one side of the square was a crowd of natives, talking in subdued voices.

Hindus kept arriving until a group of perhaps five hundred was gathered in front of the stone dais upon which stood a tall Brahman, naked to the waist, and with a whisp of hair knotted on the top of his shaved head. All of the men around me, I noticed, were armed with sticks or iron bars. Many of them had the handles of long knives sticking from their waistbands, and one young Bengali kept slicing the air with a rusty old scimitar, as if to test its keenness upon an imaginary crowd of Moslems. Every one was too intent upon voicing his own opinions to notice me, and, although I did not realize it at the time, I was perfectly secure.

Suddenly the Brahman struck a muffled bell, and the entire congregation began to sing a kind of blaring discordant hymn, punctuated with persistent clangings of the bell and the wailing of the Brahman. When the moment came to praise Vishnu, the Destroyer, the natives went wild with excitement. The Brahman, throwing caution to the winds, clanged the bell furiously, and the natives beneath him leaped up and down like dervishes, brandishing their weapons in the moonlight, and making the great square resound with a bedlam of wild cries. Roy, my companion, became as much a religious fanatic as any of them; and I, joining in to avoid being conspicuous, found myself carried away with their enthusiasm. I danced and shrieked with the rest, crying in Hindustani; "Death to the Moslems! Glory to Vishnu!

Death to the Moslems!" over and over again. All the beauty of the Hindu religion was submerged beneath our desire to avenge the desecrated gods. The celebration became a conglomeration of flashing black bodies clamoring for Moslem blood.

Although the demonstration kept up until long after midnight, no Moslems attacked us, and no blood was shed. We returned to Roy's house, where he apologized for not having shown me anything more exciting than a religious revival, but assured me that another riot would break out on Harrison Road the following day as a result of what I had participated in.

It had been frightfully hot during the past few days; and now that the excitement was over and my mind was at rest, I began to feel the oppressiveness of the heavy atmosphere. The next morning, when the city was just beginning to cool off from the heat of the previous day, I walked down through the native districts to be on hand for the coming riot. The air was passive with the heat, and, except for the occasional cry of a sleeping child, the city was quiet. Thousands upon thousands of people slept in the streets. They lay in the square, across the main thoroughfares, and in the foul lanes down by the water-front like the dead of a Turkish massacre. Now and then a dusky form would lift a knee in a ghastly manner, moan softly and be silent. Naked, homeless little children lay clustered together; and in a pool of mud near a drain lay a slender body emaciated by rickets. Along the Hugli the funeral pyres sent up tongues of flame, and through the entrances of the walled burning ghats I could see men carrying logs in silhouette against other fires that were consuming the dead of the previous day.

The sun came over the housetops at six A. M., and the heat fell like pestilence upon the city. Down in the dark bazar lanes off Harrison Road, streaks of light illuminated the hangings of silk, and laid low long fingers of quicksilver over the piles of fruits and sweetmeats. A Hindu ascetic, white with ashes from the burning ghats, squatted beneath a cotton umbrella, slowly fanning himself with a piece of cardboard; crouched beneath the floor of a bakery shop was a child offering six stemless grapes for sale. Merchants squatted in the recesses of their stores, breathing quietly beneath the rhythmic swishing of the punka, and before them groups of women and children hurried to do their buying before the intense heat of midday arrived.

Toward noon, the city became a simmering stew of humanity; a seething panorama of glistening weary bodies. It was too hot for riots, it was too hot for men to consider anything but themselves and the heat. They walked a few hundred feet under their burdens of jute to drop panting in the shade of a wall. *Garrywalas* lay on their backs beneath the shade of their carriages, and the buffalo carts creaked and groaned amid the clouds of dust. Now and then came the splitting crack of whips and a torrent of Hindustani, as the drivers cursed the animals for their weariness. The desiccated refuse arose and settled in rotation, stinging the nostrils like pepper and smarting the eyes. Beneath that heat, the city panted and struggled for existence.

I came back to my little hotel, and sat beneath the overhead fan. A mosquito appeared on my arm like a bit of dust, but I had not the heart to kill it. Calcutta mosquitoes are so small and unsophisticated; one can pinch them or caress them, and they will not take

wing. I finally pushed it off. Several crows which found the sun's rays too strong, perched in my window casement with drooping wings. It was too hot to read or even to think. I stretched my legs out over the long arm of the chair, and composed myself, staring at the crows.

In the tropics one should learn to sit out the hours very gracefully. I endured inertia for three hours, and then decided to take a walk. I thought I would go down to the Kidderpore silver bazar and talk to the Marwari who sold the imitation silver bangles. He often thought of me as a prospective customer, and I enjoyed his attempts to cheat me. Besides, he had very good cigarettes and always served me an iced drink.

As I started out the door, the old Scotch superintendent of the Mission asked if I were wearing a felt spine protector and woolen underwear. When I replied that I was not, he warned me that it would be very dangerous to walk in the "poisonous Indian sun" without them. At the very least, he said, I should have a damp sponge in the crown of my topi. But I had none of those things, and as I had already been in Bengal for a month without woolen underwear I felt safe. So he closed his eyes in slumber and settled back in his chair, clasping a prayer-book over his stomach.

I went into the street, blinked hard and started toward the bazar. I noticed that the streets were singularly deserted. After I had proceeded a hundred yards or so, I began to feel faint. I could not account for it. The back of my neck began to ache and my head throbbed sickeningly. Then my eyesight began to fail. Squint as I did, I could see only faintly; and it was only then that I began to realize how terrifically hot it really was. A

few moments later things went black, and I collapsed.

Fever and disease ran riot through Calcutta during that heat wave; and until the monsoon came and buried the city under two feet of water there were upward of four hundred natives dying each week. With the rain, I came down with the dengue fever. I have a recollection of being taken to the hospital by the old Scotch superintendent. I remember vividly lying on a cot for days and nights on end, feeling as if I were being stretched on a rack and beaten with iron bars, prodded with hot lances and boiled in volcanic lava. And through five days of this medieval torture a half-crazy Hindu at the other end of the ward sang a whining accompaniment to the shriek of a violin that he played from dawn to sunset.

At the end of nine days I managed to get discharged. I must have been a pathetic spectacle. My heart was flooded with a kind of martyred sentimentality that brought tears to my eyes whenever I saw a beggar. I bemoaned the fate of India's homeless millions, and wept copiously at the thought of the thousands of Armenians that had been massacred by the Turks.

After the riots and all the barbaric pageantry of Lower Chitpur Road, Calcutta began to be disappointing. It was full of middle-class Britishers and five-story office buildings, more like Piccadilly than India, and I knew that my instinct to avoid cities was justified. But before leaving civilization entirely, and exploring Borneo and the islands of the Java Sea, there were two cities that I wanted to see, and which I hoped would live up to their names. One was Rangoon; the other was Singapore. The first suggested elephants and teak; Singapore

smacked of blood and pearls. I decided to go to Burma, and, after more intrigue and diplomacy than one would think the occasion demanded, I bought an American citizen's passport from the consul, and took a deck passage to Rangoon.

Chapter Nine

THE PRINCE OF THE VAGABONDS

The only thing harder than a teakwood deck is one's bones. For three hours I tried to indent the deck with a jaw-bone, an elbow and a hip. It wouldn't give a mite, and my bones refused to compromise. I rested my head on a Malay's stomach, my feet upon a heap of Tamil children, but still no luck with sleep.

The ship changed her course, and the monsoon rain swept over us like a tidal wave. The ship heaved and plunged; the deck came to life, and about three hundred sodden forms scattered for the 'tween decks. Three Hindu children were sleeping in my sea bag, an enormous Afghan was using it as a pillow, and the sheltered part of the after-deck was packed with crouched natives. Below, families were piled two and three deep. I picked up my sun helmet, my cotton umbrella, and my Madras blanket and raced for the upper deck.

It was long past midnight, and the ship was asleep. The door of the first saloon smoking-room was unlocked. I opened it and walked in. Ah, but it was warm, and the long leather cushions were so soft! I laid my topi and umbrella on the floor, pulled my blanket over me, and fell asleep to the howling of the wind outside, and the pitching and rolling of the ship.

Almost before I opened my eyes the next morning I felt that there was danger approaching; and before I could arise to flee, the steward came up the stairs. He

looked at me twice, gasped and caught his breath.

"Who told you to come in here?" he demanded.

"Brahma," I replied reverently, picking up my topi and umbrella. "Have you no respect for the will of your gods?" And before he could reply I swept my gaudy blanket from the cushions, and, clad in my underwear and a topi and a cotton umbrella, strolled aft through a fleet of first-saloon passengers doing their morning three miles around the deck.

We were a gay lot, aft. Out of the helter-skelter of stately Afghans, Arabs, clustering Hindus and somber Tamils, arose three comrades; three like myself, who had bought not only a deck passage but food as well. There was a Jew, the brother of a man who had lain in the cot beside me at the hospital. He recognized me immediately, and brought out a huge lump of cheese and a wad of *chepatis* to clinch our friendship. There was a polite little Malay, who tried to insist upon my using his cot to sleep upon. "My master would like me to do it," he explained. There was a Tamil, an awed lumbering child, who sat outside our circle by the hour and tried to count up to ten in English. But the prince of all these vagabonds was an aloof Eurasian who read Catholic literature softly, and, with reverence, borrowed my cigarettes and smiled tolerantly when meals were served.

The wind and rain were sweeping the decks, and we were just beginning to settle ourselves for the voyage when I noticed him. He was not worrying about the rain or the hard teakwood deck. He reclined on a hatch cover with an immense brown topi on his head and five inches of hairy leg showing above his shoe-tops. One bony arm supported his head; and the other,

stretched at full length, held a pamphlet that he was reading. But for the fragrance of violets and a babbling brook, the picture was complete.

The angle at which his head was inclined suggested a connoisseur slightly perplexed by a profound intellectual problem; the wrinkling of his nose and the pursing of the full lips indicated that he was trying to solve it. He seemed entirely oblivious of the hectic scrambling of seasick natives. Even when he lifted his eyes, muttering to himself, he gazed over the rough sea as if the great forces working within him might cause an open volume of the Koran, or perhaps a bouquet of chrysanthemums to rise above the horizon.

Here, I thought, was one of those Orientals absorbed in the higher things of life; a superior creature, aloof, and, unlike me, far removed from the common surroundings. I sat down a few yards away and lighted a cigarette.

"Friend," said he, "may I borrow a match?"

I produced the matches. He lighted an absurdly tiny cigarette butt and returned them.

"Thank you," he sighed. He inhaled deeply, and reclined once more, twisting his left mustache reflectively.

"All this," he said with a tolerant smile, "will pass away . . ."

"Huh? What will pass away?" I asked.

"All this, my friend." He shrugged his enormous shoulders and made a gesture. "Like Nineveh and Tyre," he went on dreamily, "all will pass away."

I saw immediately that I was up against a half-caste raised in a mission school. "Aye," I replied, " 'what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' "

He started; the cigarette dropped from his fingers. But he recovered himself quickly. "The last one," he smiled. "I wonder if I might borrow one of yours?"

He picked a fat Grey's Magnum from my case, tenderly, as if it were a cream puff; tapped it gently on his thumb-nail and lighted up. I tried to recall Biblical proverbs in case he proposed another religious hypothesis; but he had evidently completed his entrée and was prepared to exchange traveler's talk. I told him that I was merely drifting, my business career had not yet begun.

"Really? Not yet? Why, my dear friend, I will give you a post in my organization!"

"Tea plantation?"

"Well . . . hardly . . . nothing *quite* so gross," he replied nervously. "I am a cinema producer."

"Hm!"

"Yes, President of the Overseas Film Corporation, Ltd." He gazed off over the sea as if to consider whether or not I were worthy of further confidences. Then he blew on his cigarette. "At the present time I am working on a perfectly stupendous production; the biggest thing, I believe, that the Orient can ever hope to produce in the name of Art!"

This curious bit of flotsam, a typical Oriental Gentleman of Fortune, favored me with a slight glance and twisted his right mustache. I was properly awed.

"My company," he said, "is the only one of its kind in the East."

I did not smile. Here was a social outcast, mentally superior to the hodge-podge of Oriental vagabonds to which he belonged. Unable to enjoy the fruits of a high-caste birth he had fallen back upon his vision; he lived in his dreams. And I sympathized with him, for

to me there is something pathetic about a man who, when reality falls short, can bridge the distance to his aspirations with a lie and be satisfied.

Typical of a dozen Indian half-castes I was to meet later, he had convinced himself that he was a kind of unique aristocrat. He implied that his parents represented the highest social orders in England and India, and mentioned notable personages of London, Bombay and Calcutta to indicate that his high birth had given him an entrée into the most exclusive circles.

"I shall never forget," he smiled, "when the Governor of Delhi wished to take me into his Cabinet." He chuckled lightly. "But I would have none of it. No, my friend, the pomp and ceremony of the court have never appealed to me. Give me a few chosen friends, a pot of tea and a good book, and I am happy. May I borrow another cigarette?"

This rare buffoon fascinated me for a week. It was a treat to see him pick his teeth with an ivory toothpick after dinner; to watch his face as he read a pamphlet of religious doctrine. Invariably, at nine forty-five, he would glance at his broken wrist-watch, spread a pitiful shred of blanket on the deck and huddle upon it, using his topi for a pillow. The other natives might huddle near him, singing, gambling and spitting betel-nut juice about his head; but he would never stir, never open his eyes. For all his surroundings he was still the aristocrat, and even asleep his face tried to express heavenly dreams and noble thoughts. I dubbed him the Disciple.

But my other companions were sincerely beautiful. The Tamils, bound for the rice-fields of Burma, had brought along their flutes and drums. Beneath the stars that glimmered through the swirls of smoke above, they

thumped the tom-toms and chanted little songs of southern India. A Persian with a mandolin braced himself against the roll of the ship to tinkle out intoxicating Turkish music; and groups of Afghans, aloof and proud, played at dice beneath a bulkhead light.

As the sea became quiet, swarms of Hindu families came up from below to spend the night on deck. In their company I began to feel the normal temperament of India that the riots had so completely concealed from me. The silver-bangled children playing at silent games, the soft voices of many mothers singing their babies to sleep and the wistful eyes of lean brown men held no indication of the germ within their brains that could transform them into religious fanatics. Here, on a steel ship, they were out of their element, like lost children being taken home. They huddled in groups, accepting the hardships of the voyage with a submissiveness born of thousands of years of subjection. That was their strength and their beauty; and I absorbed this strange nature of India until we had crossed the Bay of Bengal and sailed up the Irrawady River to Rangoon.

Three days in Rangoon were a nightmare. Except for the beautiful Burmese girls and the Chinese quarter, it was a pocket edition of Calcutta—asphalt streets, accurate rows of white buildings and scores of middle-class Britishers. I could not get up courage enough to see the Shwe-Dagon pagoda; I was afraid to look for the "elephants a pilin' teak." I wandered around the Chinese quarter looking for trouble, and when the next ship left for Singapore I went with her along with the Jew, the Malay and the Disciple. I was convinced that all seaports were the same, but would have a look at Singapore. That would be my jumping-off place.

On my new ship I was placed in a kind of cage below decks together with the Jew, the Malay and the Disciple. The true deck passengers, who cooked their own food and smelled horribly, were herded like cattle into a huge pen aft of us. The separating screen was only a social barrier, but English shipwrights had thought it best to maintain class distinction down to the amœba.

We touched at Penang, Port Swettenham, and passed hundreds of little green islands with sandy shores and sheltered coves. Catamarans idled in the labyrinths of estuaries through which we wound our way, and monkeys danced along the beach looking for crabs. We steered through the Straits of Malacca with Sumatra on our right—a great mountain range of misty blue. We glided past another swarm of islands, curved around the light-ship and sailed into Singapore.

We must have made a rare picture coming into the docks; I dressed in my one suit of whites, with my topi newly blancoed, and my umbrella set behind me at a rakish angle; the Disciple on my right, suave and aloof, smoking my last Grey's Magnum with a sense of luxury that awed the surrounding natives; the Jew on my left, dirty and slovenly in an old khaki coat open at the throat, and the Malay behind us, very quiet, and repeating over and over the phrase he had taught me: *"Rooma mankan bwat orang kapal . . . orang pootie,"* which meant, "Hotel for white seamen."

Suddenly the Jew let out a horrible bellow, waved his arms, and pointed to the crowd on the pier. "My rich grandfather!" he shouted, grasping my arm. "He's the richest man in Singapore . . . every one knows him! Hello, papa!"

A stout Jew, heavily bearded, supported a bent little

woman on his arm. He looked up at the first-class deck, waving his hand.

"Here, papa! Here! Over here with the white gentleman!"

As the ship eased in, papa and his wife ran alongside; the Jew ran in the opposite direction, shouting and waving his arms, but failing to attract the old gentleman's attention. He finally joined me with the bearing of a prince. "My grandfather is rich!" he kept bellowing in my ear. "The richest man in Singapore!" The Disciple smiled at him tolerantly, and glanced at his broken wrist-watch as the gangplank was raised to the deck.

The Jew, whose safe conduct in Singapore was guaranteed by his grandfather, went ashore bag and baggage, inviting me to visit him at his luxurious home. The Malay, very embarrassed, shook my hand, and thanked me with tears in his eyes for the book on astronomy I had given him. He would be my servant, he said, if I ever came to his home in Brastagi, Sumatra. The Disciple said; "Well, old boy, getting off here . . . good luck! Ah, haven't another cigarette, have you?"

I was the last to leave. The British port officer came up and inspected me.

"Doing it for the experience?" he grinned.

"Doing what?"

"Traveling deck."

"Oh, yes," I replied easily. "Color, you know . . . very interesting crowd."

"Well," he said, "a wire from Calcutta said you were coming, but you'll have to put up a bond to land just the same. I'd let you off in a minute if I had the authority; but those are my instructions."

Wondering if I had enough money, I assured him that

nothing could be more simple. In his office on the dock I paid over the price of a passage to Java, the nearest foreign country, and then, in a terrific cloudburst ran for the *Rooma mankan bwat orang kapal*—the Seaman's Mission.

My seaman's passport and discharge got me in all right; and because of my suit of whites the superintendent gave me a room all to myself. To reciprocate, I told him I would take three meals a day, a terrible extravagance. But then, my arrival in Singapore required some kind of a celebration; for here were blood and pearls.

Chapter Ten

MYSTERY

I SOON discovered that Chinatown was the place to live. In practically every street were long outdoor restaurants presided over by fat-bellied Chinese. The shark's fins were piled in baskets, the pots of grease simmered in the sun—all the food was laid out in the open, and any man armed with a pair of chop-sticks and two cents could step up and have a bowl of rice and fish.

Also, there were tiny eating-houses sandwiched in between the opium joints—smelly little places where one could sit at a table and be served for half a cent more, and have a cup of coffee brought from the coffee-shop for another two cents. I decided that I would eat at the Seamen's Mission no longer, and bought a pair of red chop-sticks from a pedler. I further calculated that it was wholly unnecessary for me to eat three meals a day as long as I could conserve energy by absorbing Singapore. I arose at about ten o'clock each morning, walked slowly around to a coffee-shop for coffee and a Chinese cake. Then I would park myself on a curbstone near the shark-fin market and sit there until nightfall conserving energy. At about eight o'clock I would stand in line with the rickshaw coolies and eat a good dinner of rice and fish, or perhaps a little golden pork. Although this may seem a very drab kind of existence, I was learning to speak Malay, and I was convinced that, sooner or later, I would see a pearl or a drop of blood.

The blood came first. As I entered my little restau-

rant one afternoon, whom should I meet but the Disciple. He was lounging gracefully over a chair, reading a new pamphlet of Catholic propaganda and picking his teeth with the ivory toothpick. His clothes had not been washed yet, and his eyes were exceptionally bloodshot; but his aloof manner proclaimed him still the Disciple.

"Well, well, my good friend," he drawled, "are you enjoying yourself?"

I forebore asking him about his cinema corporation. "Having a fine time," I replied. "How are you getting on?"

"I? Oh, I generally manage to be amused wherever I go . . . wherever I go!"—each of these last exclamations emphasized by a coordinated lift of the head and shoulders, like a lengthening reflection in a turned mirror. "Yes," he continued, twisting his mustache, "Singapore is a very interesting place. Have you seen any of the pleasure resorts of the city?"

"Well, I've seen the cages in Bombay, and I walked along Kamatipura in Calcutta."

"Singapore," he said gently, "is much more advanced than Bombay, and more versatile than Calcutta. I"—he coughed and apologized—"I had occasion last evening to visit a most interesting club. I just came away this morning, and was about to have a drop of coffee when you came in."

"Hm!" I said. I ordered coffee for two, and we lighted my cigarettes.

"Perhaps," he ventured, "we might drop over there this evening?" He began to read, half aloud, a passage on the salvation of the soul, and I left, promising to meet him at the coffee-shop that evening at eight o'clock.

I knew that, whatever the Disciple might be, he had

the underworld of the Orient up his sleeve. There could be nothing more appropriate, before leaving Singapore, the last of the cities, than to experience the life which went on behind the barred doors of Chinatown. It was exactly what I needed to drive me away from cities for ever, and in my eagerness to get into the heart of things at once I went up-stairs to a Chinese cabaret and ordered a pot of tea.

Two painted girls beat the drums and sang to a cacophony of squeaking fiddles and banging cymbals operated by four slender Chinese. The room was full of Chinese and Malays who seemed to enjoy the music, but when my sense of harmony could stand the noise no longer I paid my three cents and walked out.

Nothing had happened, and it did not seem as if anything interesting could happen in such a place. I wandered through the streets with my ears and eyes wide open, hunting desperately for some activity to engross my mounting energies. I peered in dark corners, followed groups of hustling Chinese and stood still in anticipation when a man or woman looked at me for more than a moment. But everything in Chinatown seemed to be without beginning or without end. Things were meaningless. I could find no opportunity to plunge in and take hold; to become a part of the teeming life around me.

Down the street came a little automobile followed by a mob of children. It stopped, and two men began to unbind a live crocodile from the running board. I rushed forward with the crowd; men and women pushed against my shoulders, swarms of natives poured from the doorways, and the buildings up and down the street as far as I could see were decked with banners and laughing Oriental faces.

But nothing happened. The crocodile was carried unceremoniously into a doorway, and I was left in the midst of a curious crowd feeling rather foolish. Was I, I wondered, so entirely different from the Chinese that I could be nothing but a ravenous sightseer?

All afternoon I honeycombed the town, running into weddings, quarrels, gaudy funerals, and all manner of activities typical of Chinese life. One beautiful funeral stretched through the winding streets for blocks. Some of the men were dressed in stiff collars and straw hats, all were having a wonderful holiday, and a discordant brass band played *There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night.* I followed the procession for an hour, but it went around and around the town, getting nowhere. At length, as the time for my rendezvous with the Disciple drew near, I left it, wondering if China itself had ever had a beginning, or if it would have an end; if any strange European could ever find the road that led into the heart of the Chinese civilization. But the Disciple, I felt, would be my salvation. If there were a secret to the wonders of Singapore he knew it. If there were some common ground of intercourse between Europeans and Orientals, he would reveal it to me. Nothing could be too subtle for the Disciple. He would lead me past the inscrutable Chinese faces to the heart of Singapore.

I took a hasty supper in the street, standing in front of a Chinese cook whose stomach glistened like a copper kettle. So delighted was he to see me manipulate my red chop-sticks that he found me a box to sit upon and insisted upon giving me another ladleful of noodles and rice. As I devoured them, shoving the edge of the bowl to my face in coolie fashion, he grinned like a butcher, and pointed me out proudly to all his customers.

The Disciple, true to his word, was sitting in our rendezvous at eight o'clock. With a genteel smile he arranged his tie, and we started down the street in the direction from which I had just come. The public opium joints, just beginning to close for the night, tinged the aromatic atmosphere of the streets with faint odors of arrack and poppy smoke; a tired little boy trotted between us offering collar buttons for sale. We turned into a dimly lighted alley, followed it up a hill between tall balconied houses, and stopped at the entrance of what looked to be a warehouse. A young Chinese appeared from the darkness and exchanged a few words with the Disciple. He unbolted the door, and we entered a huge unlighted room, that smelled of wild rubber and shark's fins. I was excited, and ready for anything. In Singapore, the crossroads of the Orient, a joint would have to be pretty bad, I thought, to need seclusion like this. The Chinese unlocked another door and led us down a narrow passage, paved with stone and lighted by tiny oil lamps. I could hear nothing; I could see only spots of lighted wall. It seemed as though we were about to take a swan barge into the depths of the earth.

Another door confronted us. The Chinese knocked. A little round spot of light flashed at one side, and an eye looked out. The door swung open, and we stepped into an electrically lighted room filled with people, and reeking with pungent odors which suggested everything from arrack to rose water. Richly dressed Chinese, Englishmen, Malays and Hindus sat and stood around tables. The gambling stakes were high, I knew, for no one glanced up as we entered, and the conversation was in subdued tones. There was little of obvious interest about the room except its remote location; yet the sight

of Europeans and Orientals mingling together convinced me that I was in the profoundest depths of Singapore's underworld.

Gambling of this high order was out of the question. The Disciple apparently felt the same way, however, for he touched my elbow, and led me into another passage that brought us into a long room, quiet as a vault. Along both sides of the room were low platforms, and upon each of them, curled about a small lamp, were two opium smokers. There was not a sound in the room; not a whisper disturbed the dreams of those whose souls had drifted away in poppy smoke.

A Chinese in a white gown sat cross-legged on a dais at my immediate left. At his side was a small iron safe, and an assortment of pipes, crucibles and other smoking paraphernalia.

Suddenly a voice said in excellent English: "Can I do something for you, sir?"

I was surprised not to have noticed the man before. He was a Chinese lying on a platform almost under my right elbow. His head rested on a hollow porcelain block, and he was holding an opium pipe over a lamp-chimney. The opium bubbled; he took several deep drags, looked up and half extended the pipe.

"Like to try it?" he asked.

I sat on his platform. "Opium?" I asked politely.

"Opium!" he replied with the characteristic nod of the Oriental. "Ah, but it is good! It is a good thing, opium; my young friend. Not like rum or arrack, no! It is sweet, and causes forgetfulness without making the body ill afterward. Won't you try it? No harm to try. . . . Three or four weeks makes a habit; once or twice is all right."

The pipe was a beautiful thing. The bamboo had darkened like ebony. Only the brass and silver mountings were polished.

"Ah, yes," he said as I took it, "a pipe is a blessed thing. It is something one keeps all one's life . . . after the wife is gone, and the children are married. It is a thing one grows to love, for it makes the heart like a rose. This one," he said reverently, "is twenty-three years old. It is full of melted opium, and now, I need prepare only a drop of fresh opium for your smoke."

My smoke! He picked up a bamboo splinter, twirled the end in a crucible of black stuff, and held the end over the lamp. When it began to swell and bubble like burned rubber he transferred it to the bowl of the pipe.

"Now inhale!" he said gently. He turned the bowl over the lamp chimney, and I drew the fragrant, deliciously fragrant smoke deep into my lungs. I drew again, again and again, long deep drafts, and exhaled.

"You must take more," I heard him say. Fresh opium was put on, and I again wrapped a cloud over my soul, and drank in the velvety softness of the opium. Six, seven, eight long pulls at the pipe. He added more opium, I inhaled again and again; and then I no longer wondered nor cared about Borneo and the islands. I began to float in a billowy fashion, and with considerable rapidity, upon clouds; and my head was buried in a fragrant fluffiness to which there was no end. Beautiful girls were dancing around the moon, swathing her in the soft caresses of their floating hair. A distant tune was lulling me to sleep with its enchanting harmonies. As I passed by they danced toward me, but before our hands touched I began to fall downward, as in a dream. I fell through glittering cities, past the spires of blue

domes into Oriental bazars filled with heavy silks and rich rugs. I sank through all these, falling through strata after strata of cities, each more gorgeous and more overflowing with richness than the last.

I was in a jungle filled with exotic, flashing birds, eloquent of voice and eye. The orchids had women's faces and their fronds were lined with waving arms. The air was heavy with perfume, yet the earth crawled with snakes and enormous blind worms. The snowy white mouths of crocodiles opened and closed, slowly, like the wings of resting butterflies, and the baleful eyes of tigers swung back and forth in the blackness like lights suspended on strings. The jungle crawled and revolved, gasped and breathed heavily. Lianas, twisted roots, orchids, birds and snakes mixed and roiled and faded.

My ship was in a terrific storm, and went down beneath mountainous waves. I clutched the air and sought to save myself, but was sucked through the green atmosphere with the ship. I saw men struggling, gesticulating horribly in death. There were Alabama and Limey . . . their faces going white, and becoming a ghastly green that changed to a bluish color. Fleshy octopuses and resplendent white and purple sea animals with globulous eyes and human hands tore the flesh from the bodies and devoured it. I saw the agonized face of the bo'sun between the tentacles of a beast that was nothing but a tangle of tentacles about a fat belly. One of them spied me, and advanced in an awkward crab-like fashion. From all sides they came toward me with the blood of my comrades on their bearded faces. But I shrank as they came close; I grew smaller and smaller, until, as they were upon me, I was completely dissolved into the

bed of the sea, and awoke to find a Chinaman beside me smoking the pipe. The Disciple was lying on a platform near by.

My head was as clear as a bell; my mental faculties, I thought, sharp and discerning. A door opened at the far end of the room and a man came out. In the dim light I saw the golden form of a Chinese girl. Softened by the dim light, she stood in the doorway like a painting by Rembrandt. She saw me arise, waited until I had entered and closed the door softly behind me.

Sandalwood was burning in a bronze bowl; several bottles of arrack and absinthe stood on a Chinese table. Many of the girls were asleep in the curtained compartments, and I judged it was well past morning. At a table in one corner of the T-shaped room were three girls in negligée. One of them looked like a Russian, and the other two were Kashmir girls. They sipped bowls of tea and smoked thick cigarettes.

I spoke in French to the Russian girl, but she smiled and shook her head. I tried English, and she replied with a perfect accent. She was a person of considerable education and charm; and for a half-hour or so we discussed the life in various countries. For six months, she said, she had been stationed in Cairo. Then she had gone to Port Said and Bombay. Now, she had made a protest, and hoped that they would send her back to Vladivostok.

We were startled by the heavy boom and reverberation of a revolver-shot. I rushed out of the room, between the opium smokers, and down the hall toward the gambling room to find the door closed. I pushed, but it did not yield. I pushed harder. Suddenly, as if unaware of my efforts, it opened slowly from the inside,

and I entered. The acrid smell of burned powder stung my nostrils. There was no excitement. The room was empty except for a group of men playing quietly at a table.

I was puzzled beyond the power of reason. Here, in the sink-hole of a dozen different races, the unfathomable mystery of the Orient still prevailed. I began to realize that every sensation I had experienced thus far had been of my own creation. I was in the center of things, yet I could neither touch nor see them. I was no more a participant in the life of Singapore's underworld than if I had been a tourist inspecting the opium joints of San Francisco.

No one wondered who I was or asked what I was doing here. Every one seemed independent and wholly concerned with himself. There seemed to be no proprietor, yet things went on in a smooth orderly fashion, as if guided by an unseen hand. How did they know that I was not a British official in disguise? True, I was dressed like any European beachcomber, but some genius of character reading had certainly approved me before I came in. Perhaps it was the coolie who had guided us in from the street; perhaps he was the proprietor of the den.

I never found out, nor did I ever discover more than I had seen that night. The Disciple was still in the Elysium of the poppy fields, and although I shook him he failed to respond with even the flicker of an eyelash. The Chinese who had spoken to me the night before and given me the pipe was gone, so I wrote a note on rice paper with the ink and brush and tucked it under the huge ring on the Disciple's left hand. No one came to request money for the services I had been rendered, and no one

seemed to notice my departure. The heavy door opened as I approached it, and a strange coolie led me back to the street.

I felt as if I had spent three years in the center of the earth. The sunlight practically blinded me, rickshaw men ran in front of me like crickets; the clatter and smells of the city seemed like memories of another day, like happy symbols of a normal world. Yet I had been underground for only seventeen hours.

For the next few days I wandered through the city like a somnambulist, thinking of my weird opium dreams, the revolver-shot, and the beautiful, soft-spoken girls. It was more like a vision than a reality, and I passed the entrance again and again to convince myself that I had not been dreaming.

Chapter Eleven

THE MAGIC VEIL

It was time to move on. I had recovered from my dengue fever, and the injuries suffered aboard the *Hyacinth* no longer troubled me. The tall mountains of Sumatra I could see from Collyer Quay, and the volcanic peaks of a thousand islands made a blurred fresco on the horizon to the south. I climbed to the top of the lighthouse hill, and saw the peaks of a thousand other islands overlapping one another like shadows thrown by many lights. Beyond those farthest peaks lay Java. Sinbad had found it inhabited by apes and curious brown people. Its name, to me, ranked with Timbuctoo, Stamboul and Cathay. Spices and whales and weathered ships came from Java; and a hundred strange craft from Java lay in the harbor below me. I would go to Java.

But the prospect of sailing the Java Sea in a steamboat was revolting. Such a voyage should be made in one of those high-pooped sampans, painted like a circus float, with ribbed sails and a Malay crew. With my Malay dictionary and phrase book, and a smattering of Malay picked up in seven days, I started to look for one.

It requires a certain tact, a prescribed method of approach to draw an Oriental into conversation. To the blunt question they will merely say, "Yes," just to be pleasant—always "Yes." One must sit quietly for a while, and appear to be wrapped in his own thoughts

before it is expedient to comment upon the weather or inquire about the sailing of boats. Thus I sat on a rickety old wharf near which some Chinese and Malays were painting and overhauling their sampans. I took an old line and hook from my pocket, dropped it into the water and pretended to fish. For an entire morning I sat in the burning sun without speaking a word. In the afternoon I went there again and sat on a piece of teak beside the workmen. A Chinese recognized me, and offered a friendly *'tabek!'*

My Malay was rather crude, but I had been studying certain phrases and expecting certain answers for so long that I plunged into conversation with great confidence.

"The weather is fine for sailing, now." I said.

"Sahaya!" he replied emphatically.

"Are there any sampans going to Java?"

Here was my Waterloo. He burst into a torrent of Malay, out of which I gathered, mostly by gesture, that there were few sampans sailing.

"Are you sailing soon?" I said desperately.

Again the flood of Malay, shrugs, gestures and flashing of eyes, out of which I gathered nothing.

"I want to go to Java, and I do not speak Malay well," I cried as a last resort.

He grinned effusively, nodded and pointed to some men carrying burdens from a sampan farther up the beach. But all of these men, or any one of them, failed to enlighten me in the least. I wished the Disciple were with me to interpret, but had no idea where to find him.

At the end of two days of frantic roving from one end of Singapore to the other, I met a merchant who spoke English. He said that I should go to a native

clearing house near the estuary in the middle of the city. There, he said, I would find out about each and every sampan that sailed for Java.

I hurried to the address. It was one of a series of odorous warehouses near a dock heaped with tortoises, shark fins, copra, bales of tea and rice, and all the rank, delicious cargoes of the Orient. An immense Chinese, very dirty, but with an excellent command of English, and a courtesy that turned his greasy clothes into silken raiment, informed me that because of the lateness of the rice crop in Java, there was little trade to the island.

"If you will look in the harbor," he said, "you will see over two hundred of our boats lying idle. The best thing to do is to take one of the Royal Packet Navigation Company's boats. These steamers get there in two days, and I believe one can go very cheaply. If you wait for a sampan, you may have to wait one month."

One month in Singapore? In my hurry to get away I forgot all about the bond I had left with the port inspector. I fell back upon a deck passage as the next best thing, boarded the neat little Dutch steamer at eight the next morning, and by noon was sailing the Java Sea.

We seemed to be sailing through a chain of lakes, for the water was the color of Persian deserts in the springtime when the pale grass begins to sprout, and we were surrounded by an elastic amphitheater of volcanic peaks. In between were sugar-loaf dots, coiffured with palms; juts of rock in bold relief against the gray outline of distant mountains. All were beautiful, and I should not have been sorry had the steamer been wrecked upon any one of them, for it was but a swim to the one, a hop to the next, with little thatched huts and friendly Malays to greet me.

I was sobering down to the life of a deck passenger, and did no more childish pranks like sleeping in smoking rooms. The weather was perfect, and I envied no saloon passenger; I was used to teakwood decks and preferred the sky to a white ceiling. My fellow passengers were mostly Malay pilgrims from Mecca, and there was no one to complain that I needed a bath. The mate nodded to me politely on his daily inspection of the ship, and I nodded in return. The first-saloon passengers peered down over the rail to have a look at me, and I lay there and let them look. One of them took out a camera to photograph me, and I, in an obliging mood, turned over on my stomach, rested my head against a Malay's leg, and let out a little squeal. I lay out in the sun like a lizard, peaceful and contented, drank in the soft language of the Malays and wondered what I would find in Java.

Unfortunately, I had forgotten to bring food with me. The Malays ate four meals a day. Sometimes they ate five and six times; and there were a few who always had a pot of rice and fish between their knees. Toward evening, an old fellow, in the company of several women, saw the starved look in my eyes and invited me to squat in with them. Pride, thank God, is more elastic than the stomach. I squatted down in full view of the upper deck and threw the delicious pellets of rice and fish into my mouth with the rest of them. Then I hid my face in a coil of rope and hated the rest of the world. Ay, what is pride! These Malays on deck should have been my people; companions with red-stained teeth and soft hearts, with the minds of children and the souls of doves; companions who squatted down on their hams, men and women, so that the flesh of their thighs bulged out like the bellies of fat trout; who ate with their hands and

wiped their greasy fingers on their legs. They were a comforting crowd.

We arrived at Batavia in the morning, and my first greeting from Java was the shrill whistle of an electric train which was speeding over an embankment toward the city. Well, what of it? I had killed a tiger within sixty miles of Calcutta!

But the heart of Batavia was drearily quiet, and only the tinkling of native pony carts proved that it was not deserted. The shops were set back from the wide streets like private estates; a vast open space called Koenigsplein Oost gave the appearance of a deserted ball park, and the scrupulous cleanliness of the place annoyed me. The canal running down the center of the main street was clean, the streets were clean, and the houses looked as if dairymaids had scrubbed them with milk.

I started walking outside of the city, but it was impossible to get out. For miles in every direction were the endlessly long asphalt streets flanked by monotonous rows of trees and squat Dutch bungalows. There were no slums to contrast with the cleanliness; no throbbing native bazars, no dazzling market-places. Everywhere the city was the same, like a tiny hamlet stretched beyond all proportion.

After all, however, I was in Java. Flores and the Soomba Islands were but a step to the east, Borneo was just across the way, and the wild islands of the Banda Sea had never looked upon a Dutch ship. I started back to my little hotel with the idea of going east, for Java had not yet touched a vulnerable spot.

I short-cut through a native quarter in order to reach Koenigsplein Oost. Coolies were squatted around the little traveling restaurants, sipping tea by the light of

tiny oil lamps The fruit venders called their wares in tired long monotones, and the smell of opium, mingled with frying rice, drifted from a dimly lighted Chinese shop. Suddenly, from the warm darkness ahead, came the thudding of drums and the faint blare of brass. At intervals, like the cry of a sleeping child, a fiddle note pierced the soft rhythm.

There is something magnetic in the sound of a rawhide drum; I hurried toward it, walking on the grass so that my footsteps would not deaden its primitive beat. I passed a group of huts, crossed an open field, and came to the edge of a large field. Ahead of me, in the soft light of lamps, three capering figures shifted back and forth in weird silhouette, leaped like shadows, poised a moment, and then pranced the beaten earth in wide circles.

At my arrival, no one glanced up. A native, squatted in the dust, caressed the ends of his drum with both hands, patted it softly and began to beat out a second deep rhythm that froze the native spectators into silence. At one side, a line of women with their hands limply clasped at their stomachs, parted their lips in a high soulless wail. The fiddle shrieked and grated, the bamboo xylophone clanged the melody into deafening repetition. From the circle of awed natives, tired and sweaty with their day's work, a single coolie stepped forward.

I had not the faintest idea of what was about to happen. The women, standing at one side like marionettes, seemed to be professional dancers hired for the purpose of enticing men to pay for the privilege of dancing in their company. The three men in the circle were certainly not absorbed in the dancing, for they kept sidling toward the women with ogling eyes and suggestive

motions. But the single coolie proved to be of another mood, for without so much as a glance at the women he tossed a few cents at the feet of the orchestra leader and stepped into the dancing ring.

For a moment he poised, swayed dreamily, absorbing the slow pulse of the orchestra. The droop lifted from his tired shoulders, and muscles that had strained under burdens throughout the day flowed now with a careless grace. His legs stiffened, his wide eyes reflected the empty blackness of the night; slowly, he gave his body to the heavy, solid rhythm of the music.

I had heard of the Javanese dance as a marvelous exhibition of grace, but never had I realized how deeply it could be rooted into the soul of a native. This coolie, as disreputable and as typically common a human being as one could find in the entire island of Java, began, through his dancing, to reveal the history of an empire. He was utterly absorbed in the past, and to those who could read he was an open book.

With the studied grace of a peacock he moved in and out among the dancers, unconscious of his poor clothes, too deeply immersed in the symbolism of forgotten sentiments to be ashamed of expressing them. The wars of the rajas were reborn in the fierce gyrations of his twisting body, the delicacy of batik work in the flickering of butterfly fingertips. Centuries of Javanese myth and magic came to life in the swaying shoulders; now I could see their fierce enthusiasm for color that made a festival of religion; now the peaceful home-life of a million coolie families. Ignoring the xylophone he created a slower, subtler rhythm by the strangely detached motions of his arms, painting before my eyes a picture of Java, fading beneath the culture of the Western World.

He was alone in spirit, alone in sentiment. The girls laughed when he passed them. They could not understand a coolie who became so utterly lost in the past; and I felt that the dance was for me. I had come to see Java; I was willing to bend the knee before any man who could reveal it to me.

The bamboo xylophone clanged and reverberated, and the coolie, in strutting the earth like a spring buck, expressed in a last haughty shake of his head his contempt for the world. With the bearing of a prince he swept his ragged coat from the ground and disappeared into the night.

I remained still, half seeing the crude antics of the remaining dancers. Java, with its whales and spices, its temples and its wars, filled my eyes. There was nothing left unsaid; nothing left undone. A coolie had shown me the Island of Monkeys in all its glory; he had revealed to me every mood of its existence. And I sympathized with him, for the moment recalling a night in New York when I had heard the distant honking of wild geese far above the lights of the city.

Chapter Twelve

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Since Soerabaia was the jumping-off place for the Soomba Islands I traveled to it by the fastest train from Batavia. It was the hottest place below the equator, and the waters surrounding it were filled with crocodiles. Outside the city was a flock of famous volcanoes and a number of tourists' shrines; but the thing that kept me in Soerabaia more than one day was the crocodiles.

I must say that, with the exception of tigers and elephants, nothing fascinates me more than a crocodile. Encased in a granite-like hide, he is built to outlast the ages. The predatory gleam in his eye would make a financier green with envy, and the subtle way in which he can disguise himself as a drifted log until his prey is within reach of his jaws is a lesson to any charlatan. When he is indisposed, he is an inert clod; when he wants to move, he is faster than greased lightning. He reaches unbelievable lengths, nothing in the world outlives him, yet he multiplies himself like a guinea-pig. As we Anglo-Saxons say: "It's a fine day, let's go out and kill him!"

Good luck, and nothing more, brought me to the crocodiles. I was at the annual Soerabaia fair one evening, when I came upon a booth filled with stuffed snakes and lizards, and all kinds of articles made of reptile skins. The proprietor was a young Belgian who did all the hunting himself, and within ten minutes we were swapping shooting experiences.

"There's nothing like crocodile hunting at night!" he said enthusiastically. "Shooting them in the lagoons in the moonlight!"

"Not around here, though!"

"Yes! Around here! Last night I got seven, only twenty minutes away from Soerabaia. Within an hour I can go to a lagoon where they are as thick as fish, and up to twenty-five feet long!"

There was no necessity for me to suggest a trip; my enthusiasm was such that he promised to call around for me at my hotel in his little car and take me to a lagoon where we could shoot crocodiles until dawn. I smiled at the thought of the volcanoes and temples that every tourist gazes upon in an effort to know Java. Crocodile hunting throbbed with the romance of the past; it was like an excerpt from the coolie's dance in Weltevreden.

Promptly at five o'clock that afternoon he drove up with two guns,—a Winchester forty-four and a shotgun,—some lunch, and a large electric spotlight. We drove west for an hour over a flat agricultural country interlaced with canals and irrigation ditches, and then turned down an arcade of tall palms. We stopped beside an estuary that flowed through a village of thatched huts.

Two Javanese appeared at his call, and piled paddles, guns and search-light into a long dugout. Down the estuary we went, on toward the lagoons. We left the main channel, pushed through a screen of foliage, and began to creep beneath a water-soaked jungle.

Darkness came. The search-light disclosed circular patches of matted foliage ahead, and the dark sheen of the water. The air was deliciously sweet, heavy with rich dead odors. Lianas trailed across our foreheads,

and branches, let loose by the native in the boat, slapped us with their wet hands. We could see nothing but the spots of lighted jungle, and hear nothing but the cautious ripple of water from the long poles.

Arthur, sitting quietly behind me, spoke no word. In Soerabaia he had been a lively metropolite; but here, drifting through the jungle, he blended perfectly with the spirit of the night. I wondered if Jerry Joyce were thinking of me; Jerry, standing at the fo'castle head with the sea in his blood, cursing the sea. Why had he never left the sea to know the beauty of the jungle at night? How could docks and shipping, now so remote in my mind, blind him to the peace of moonlit lagoons and dark shadows?

Suddenly the Javanese ceased poling. They threw the poles ahead, and leaped out of the dugout. We had come to an embankment; and when I had climbed out and reached the top I saw a magnificent lagoon spread before me. It was quiet with the encompassing peace, glowing under the moonlight with the ecstasy of its own beauty. The Javanese, against the blackness of the jungle, were somber, malevolent shadows; in silhouette against the lagoon, they were children of the moon.

"Ha! It's nice, eh!" my companion chuckled, and slapped his chest. One of the Javanese carried the luggage from the dugout, and the other appeared in front of us paddling a catamaran. It was long, and curiously carved. On either side were outriggers of bamboo.

"For us?" I asked.

"Of course! A crocodile would never tip that over, though a big fellow once bit those outriggers in half. You must never let a crocodile get near the boat. If he

gets his jaws over the bow, it's"—he laughed—*"slamat jalan!"*

As the natives loaded the catamaran, he connected the search-light and flashed its powerful beam across the lagoon. Foliage, a tree trunk, shimmering water . . . then, within the circle of light appeared two spots of red, sparkling like blown coals.

"The big one!" he exclaimed. "He's at least twenty-five feet long, but wise as a cat!"

The eyes of the crocodile blazed up like bonfires and disappeared. He had sunk beneath the surface of the water.

We took our places in the catamaran and glided over the lagoon. Once again the search-light revealed the flaming eyes of a crocodile, and, at a motion of Arthur's arm, the craft sped toward him. The paddles were absolutely noiseless, we made gestures instead of sounds. The red spots began to move toward a wall of foliage; we changed our course to meet them. Arthur arose, and at fifteen feet, fired both barrels.

A deafening whir of wings drowned the echoes of the gun. Against the moon, the wall of jungle rose higher and higher, broke into chunks and flung itself into a filigree of scattering ducks that the shot had aroused from the palmettos. They arose and kept on arising; in swarms, by thousands and by tens of thousands they thundered up from the palms and disappeared. When we came closer to retrieve the crocodile, a fresh outburst of ducks came up; the last of a geyser of wild fowl that must have been packed in unbelievable masses beneath the foliage.

One of the Javanese, in an effort to locate the crocodile, began prodding into the mud with a bamboo pole

fitted with a rotan noose. At length, at a word from Arthur, he laid down the pole and dived into the water. A few moments later he reappeared with the head and shoulders of a lifeless crocodile. It was not a large one, but we bound its jaws together and secured its powerful tail as a precaution.

The paddles dipped again, and we glided through a maze of lianas into a second lagoon so large that the encircling rim of foliage was no more than a narrow black band between the water and the starry sky. Shadows of low-flying clouds passed over us; fireflies twinkled in the distance with the lesser stars, and in the water at our elbow was reflected a bright moon. But for that narrow black band we might have been drifting through space.

Suddenly the search-light revealed the eyes of three more crocodiles, two of them quite close together in a small inlet, and a third moving rapidly across its center. But we did not follow. We were cruising around for the big one; and Arthur could tell by the eyes alone whether or not it was worth while following up every pair of red lights that flashed.

We moved with the utmost caution, like a dry leaf blown by a gentle breeze. Wide gaps in the mud banks showed where some enormous beast had made a passage-way from one lagoon to another. Once, near the shore, Arthur leaped from the catamaran, dived into the swampy undergrowth and reappeared with a tiny crocodile clasped between his thumb and forefinger.

The big one would not let us get close. He was canny, and had been shot at too many times not to realize that the brilliant white light meant danger; and when one has only two little knobs, the size of hickory nuts, to shoot

at, one must be rather close to hit them by the uncertain beam of a search-light.

At three A. M. the catamaran was loaded to the gunwales with dead crocodiles, and we began to paddle straight across the large lagoon toward the dugout. Although the search-light was turned off, the Javanese, by habit, paddled noiselessly. The setting moon threw the jungle's shadow far out over the water in a careless half-circle, leaving a slender orbit of glowing surface between us and the opposite shore. And such loveliness we could not help but feel. It was a moment rare in the annals of experience; our lust to kill had been satisfied; now we were ready to absorb a bit of the eternal. We were receptive, trying to become attuned to the silence and the strange encompassing beauty.

It is at such moments that things happen; things that, like a vengeance on the part of Eternity, thrust the Anglo-Saxon once more into his proper sphere, shut him out entirely from the cosmic scheme that he likes to call his background and make him what he is, the bull in the china shop. We had lighted cigarettes and were becoming children once more when the native paddling at the bow gripped my shoulder, the native at the stern steadied his paddle and Arthur arose with the shotgun at his shoulder.

With the Winchester in my hand I turned my head to see an irregular black object lying across our bow not twenty feet ahead. It had come out of the shadow, and was drifting across the orbit of moonlight.

No words were spoken. We forgot the beauty of the lagoon, we forgot the silence; the paddles, eddying in the water, urged us on. Fifteen feet . . . twelve feet . . . Our guns roared in unison, and the crocodile

disappeared, rocking our catamaran with the might of his swirl.

What could we do? We stood, glancing about, ready for the charge. It was undoubtedly the "big one." An enormous head surged toward us, and a thick tail pulled the water out of shape as my Winchester spoke once more.

Arthur stuck the bamboo pole into the mud, and for a good fifteen minutes we circled around it, waiting for another rise. The Javanese took another pole, and began to prod the bottom.

"Ay, Toean!" He grinned, jammed the pole down hard so that it shook in his hand. He felt around longer, tightened the noose and began to heave. The three of us heaved, almost went overboard when the pole pulled away; then heaved again. Eventually we drew the head of the crocodile to the surface.

It required a trip to the dugout and the two craft lashed together to bring him ashore. It was morning before we laid him in the yard of Arthur's shop and put the tape to him. Twenty-four feet, nine inches, and he looked as if he had been made in a blacksmith's shop. His claws, I do believe, could have torn through corrugated iron. I suspect that to this day his hide is soaking in a barrel of curative. Arthur's grandchildren will probably have the job of tanning it.

Chapter Thirteen

THE ISLANDS OF SLEEP

Arthur was more than a hunting companion; he was a disciple of the Faith; for when I told him of my plan to explore the Soomba Islands in a sampan he not only agreed, but claimed that it was the only way it could be done. Flores, Sumbawa, Sandalwood and all the rest of the islands of the Java and Arafura Seas were wild. An occasional Dutch steamer stopped offshore of the largest, but never touched the small ones. He was sure that I could find a sampan that went to Flores, and to settle matters immediately ordered one of his workmen to go down to the harbor with me and find one.

I had come to know the native mind well enough to realize that, if we found a boat, it would either be leaving immediately or indefinitely, so I took along my roll of clothes prepared to leave at once. I even staked two guilders on getting away the same day, and hired a taxi which bounced us over an endless expanse of flat sand, toward pale green water, and the stacks of a few steamers.

The water-front was immense, with plenty of space for everybody, and each boat took advantage of it by having a good square mile of seaboard to itself. On the other side of some low warehouses, where coffee and spices were being loaded into Dutch boats, was a harbor enclosed by a sea-wall. Within this little pocket were sampans of all sorts. Several had their sails up, and one of them was preparing to put to sea. The wind bellied its canvas, an oar flushed in the brilliant sunlight.

Perhaps it was going to Flores! I hurried my boy along in the wild hope that it *was* eastward bound. We arrived panting on the pier among a group of natives; a hasty jargon of Malay followed, and to my utter amazement the little workman pointed to the departing boat, saying: *"Ithu sampan jalan ka Flores."*

I yelled at the top of my lungs and waved my hand for them to return. The natives smiled. At a word from my boy, one of them quite casually gestured for the craft to return. The sail came down, and two men at the sweeps turned her back to the sea-wall.

It seemed incredible that any one should halt the departure of a ship for me; yet here was a large, high-pooped sampan loaded with cargo, obediently coming alongside the pier at my command. My boy explained to the captain that I wanted to sail south, and the haggling over a price commenced. After about fifteen minutes, during which I would readily have given all I possessed to bind the bargain, the boy said to me:

"He says he wants twenty guilders, *Toean*. I'll tell him that's too much, eh?"

"Twenty guilders!" I cried indignantly, knowing that I would gladly pay fifty, "ten guilders would be too much!"

The boy translated my reply with additions; and the captain played his master-stroke by quietly stepping into his boat again, and waving to the men to push off.

"Hey!" I cried, "hold up!"

But my boy gave me a glance that spoke volumes.

"Twelve guilders," he said to the captain.

The captain shrugged, my boy grinned at me over his conquest, and I pressed two guilders into his hand and stepped aboard. The sailors pushed off, the sail was run

up, and slowly, majestically, we moved toward the pale waters of the Java Sea.

There were days of heat, when the beeswax bubbled in the deck seams, and I blessed the shadow of the sails; there were nights that drew on like a benediction, when the stars appeared and we sailed down a shimmering lane of ocean toward a barred moon. Then I would sit on the high carved poop; so high that had I not clung to the mainstay I would have been catapulted over the bow by her rollickling midnight plunges. There I would sit like a Buddha, until, when sleep claimed me, I stepped below, to lie down upon our cargo of Manchester cotton and German aluminum.

Sometimes we sailed close to the islands, so close that I could see the monkeys hunting for shell-fish along the shore, and flocks of green pigeons sweeping across the valleys. At other times we were so far out that I could see no land, no life of any kind save the brown bodies of the four Malays who drowsed beneath the shade of the lateen sail. The days were passive and quiet, like the minds of old men given to reflection.

Occasionally we stopped at small villages to land cargo. At Bali I bought some king cocoanuts and an armful of mangoes to eke out my diet of fish and rice. At Lombok, a fleet of catamarans came out to take away a case of cotton goods and some aluminum-ware. The forthcoming days loomed up like mile-stones into the heart of Australasia, and I began to think of leaving the sampan, getting off at the next island and going to sleep under a cocoanut-palm for a few months; but the very name of Flores urged me on. As long as Flores and Sandalwood Island lay ahead, I could not stop. Each night was like another hypodermic of dreams, urging me on.

We touched several times at Sumbawa, but as we passed its eastern tip, headed for Flores, a squall came up which forced us to run for the shelter of a small island to the south of our course. The squall increased in fury, and it was only by dangerous sailing across a powerful wind that we succeeded in reaching the lee of a point by evening. Within this lagoon the water was perfectly calm; but outside, the waves rolled past in foaming processions, and the palms along the peninsula leaned with the wind. There was no telling how long the storm might keep up, so we came in close to the shore, dropped the anchor and prepared to spend the night.

It was a barren, inhospitable island. The trees looked stunted and shriveled by the heat; they were peculiar trees, unlike any I had ever seen in Java or Sumbawa. I began to realize that we had sailed far below the equator, and were approaching a latitude with a new climate.

Water was one thing we needed. My king cocoanuts had been exhausted a day before, and if we left the following morning we would need some liquid to tide us over to Flores. Tsavi, who understood my Malay best of any one in the sampan, picked up a long pole and went ashore with me in the small boat to search for water. We took parallel routes into the island, keeping within shouting distance of each other, and at length, as darkness came, began to turn back. I reached the beach to hear him scream, *"Toean, Toean! Cheechuck besar!"* And a moment later he burst through a clump of low brush, ran across the sand and threw himself at my feet. In gasps, he said that he had seen an enormous lizard. It was as long and as thick as a sampan. It had crawled out of depression in the rocky earth and attacked him with its mouth open, and if he had not run like a deer

it would surely have devoured him. He trembled with fright and urged me immediately to get into the boat and hurry back to the sampan.

I thought, of course, that he had seen a crocodile, for these beasts often lay back in the game trails waiting for deer or wild pigs. But it was getting dark, and as I had no more desire than he to investigate either a *cheechuck besar* or a crocodile in the night, we poled back to the boat. All the while he kept repeating that it was not a crocodile, but an enormous lizard. Its tongue was forked like that of a snake, and it moved with lightning rapidity, raising itself off the ground on all four feet with its head and tail in the air. But as he talked, his description became so utterly fantastic that I was convinced he had either actually seen a prehistoric monster or that his imagination had played him a trick.

But what kind of an animal could it be? In Siam there was the six-foot Monitor lizard, but this was not Siam; it was merely an obscure little island in the outwaters of the Java Sea, too small and unvegetated, I thought, to hold anything larger than a horned toad. What animal on such an island could be as big as a sampan, run like lightning and attack a man with open jaws and a forked tongue?

That night the moon came out, and the sky was clear and bright with stars. Toward early morning the captain, in spite of my pleas that we stay and investigate Tsavi's great lizard, put out to sea and began to skirt the west coast of the island. The moonlight cut every object on the beach into sharp relief against the white sand; and I sat on the high after deck hoping that I might see one of the monsters.

We rounded the southern tip of the island at day-

break to meet a strong head wind against which we could not hope to sail. On the far horizon I could see the peaks of a high mountain range; but as the captain's next port of call was on the east coast, directly in the teeth of the wind, there seemed little hope of reaching Flores that day. We turned back, and began to look for a sheltered lagoon where we could anchor, look for fresh water and await fair weather. Luck was with me; I would have an opportunity to go ashore.

We sailed into the first sheltered cove to see three catamarans drawn up on the beach. Men and women were walking among some huts partly concealed by a screen of cocoanut-palms, and I discovered upon landing that they were unlike any natives I had ever seen. Their skins were neither golden nor brown; they were almost black. Their hair was not straight but kinky and frizzled, like a negro's. Their teeth were filed to sharp points, their noses were broad and their faces flat. Also, they were more powerfully built than either the Javanese or the natives of Sumbawa or Lombok. They spoke Malay, however, and after we had refreshed ourselves with water and cocoanut milk, Tsavi told of his experience with the great lizard the night before. I watched their faces closely, but they were expressionless.

"It was a crocodile, wasn't it?" I asked when he had finished.

"No, *Toean!*" they cried emphatically. "Not a crocodile! It was a lizard! There are many of them here!" And one of them, going into one of the huts, brought forth a huge skull that could not, by any stretch of the imagination, have been that of a crocodile. I asked how long the animal was, and they measured off a distance of about seven feet between them; but quickly gave me

to understand that this was a small one. There were others, they said, as long as a cocoanut tree, with great long teeth and a forked tongue with which they speared men and drew them into their mouths.

This particular lizard, I gathered, had been chased to the edge of the cliff by dogs. Its back had been broken in the fall, and they had killed and eaten it. I suggested that they accompany me on a search for such a beast, but although I am sure I made myself understood, they put me off with phrases that I could not understand. From Tsavi I learned that they did not want to hunt the beasts.

The dawn swept over the islands like a prairie fire, destroying the lingering fragrance of the night. It absorbed the soft sheen of the lagoons and left the water like green marble. A heated breeze, ebbing in from the south, threw a prismatic veil over my eyes, and closed my nostrils for the day. With kegs of fresh water, a score of cocoanuts and cactus fruit aboard, we set sail, drifting east toward the island of Flores.

Since the previous evening we had talked of nothing but the dragon lizards. We wondered how many of them there were; Tsavi wondered whether they grew as large as whales, and if they could eat three men, seven men, fifteen men and a number of dogs at one mouthful. Inspired by our enthusiasm, the captain and two sailors told stories of all the strange beasts their imaginations had ever conceived; but Tsavi, having actually discovered the most amazing beast of all, was the hero of the hour, and I could not find it within my conscience to disagree with anything he said about it. Thus we talked and imagined until we had passed another small island and sighted the lofty peaks of Flores at sunset.

No written word had brought me to Flores, nor had any man ever mentioned it to me. Out of the countless names that encircled the map of the world, Flores had been unforgettable—an oasis of beauty in an unexplored sea; an island without a history, but with a name that made it immortal.

We crept like ghosts along the moonlit coast. Great black clouds billowed up against the stars from the peaks to the southwest; now and again these clouds glowed red, and gusts of flame burst into them from the crater lip. The skies were purple, lowering to long peninsulas that spread over the quiet sea with a filigree of frozen palms. On our level was darkness, absolute serenity and peace.

So this was Flores; this was the madness that had burned its name into my brain. It was a time for the shedding of blood, the setting for a human sacrifice. The rest of the world went completely out of focus, and I felt as if I were on another planet.

I was awakened by shouting and laughter the next morning to find that we were in a sparkling lagoon. Alongside our boat were three catamarans filled with frizzly-haired natives who were loading odorous panniers of sandalwood and beeswax into the hold. From the long white beach other craft were putting out. Women and children hurried down from a small village. The captain, seeing me up and about, announced that we were at the village of Tio. His voyage, he said, was ended. If I wanted to return to Soerabaia it would cost me twenty guilders.

Return to Soerabaia? When the catamarans went ashore with their cargoes I went with them; freed from the last vestige of civilization, free to leave my bones whitening upon the sands if I chose. The island was

alive, the people were alive, here was sunlight and vitality. My illusions had taken their last stand; I was drifting at last into the land of the Florese islanders.

Earth-worshipers and smellers of sandalwood they were; a happier, more utterly pagan crowd I never met. There were beautiful girls with satiny skins, enough of them to fill a Grecian tympanum. Each thatched hut was a kindergarten, which, from the abundance of pregnant women, showed no signs of depletion. The men, all of them, were happy beasts with filed teeth and curly hair that seemed to rise from the laughter wrinkles in their faces. I gave an old safety-razor blade to one of them, and some Catholic prayer-beads to a woman. The depths of my ditty-bag provided a charm for most every one, and by a common unspoken consent I was their guest. Immediately the excitement was over, my fever-weakness returned. I lay down inside a hut and slept until the cool of the evening.

That night there was a celebration. I thought it was a celebration in my honor, for all the village was gathered in and around my hut, and women began to lay steaming baskets of baked vegetables in a row. Baskets of tiny dried fish, baked fish, baked fruits wrapped in leaves, came on, and children and girls walked up with cocoanuts cleaved open at the top for drinking. We ate, not in the stiff atmosphere that a strange guest creates, but with a hilarity and joyousness that, to this day, I can not explain. We laughed at nothing, and continued to laugh; I slapped the men on the back in a political fashion, and they screamed with laughter. The girls giggled, and exposed mouthfuls of hot food through which their filed teeth showed like rows of chipped pearls.

I was already reeling under the inordinate quantity of

food I had stuffed down, when the women brought forth two huge bowls of a vibrant brew, and several cocoanut-shell dippers. Men, women and children dipped into this ambrosia like bees; and I was not among the laggards, for in truth there were none. It became stuffy within the hut and we went out, laughing and gesticulating at words and phrases that neither of us could understand.

Whether it was Flores, the ambrosia or the moonlight I do not know; but I became blissfully happy. My eyes held a magic wand that transformed every living thing I looked upon into an object of exquisite beauty, and my ears and nostrils caught odors and sounds too dangerously rich in suggestion to harbor within an inebriated brain. We sped through the shafts of moonlight, and down to the beach. We held hands and ran up and down, into the surf, through the breakers and back again. We rolled on the sand like puppies, and indulged all the fancies that fourteen mad men could conceive. Now we were savages with filed teeth dancing under the moon; now lovers, sick with the beauty of the tropic night. The next instant we were clowns, prancing the packed sand to the mad cantabile of our pulses and wholly absorbed in our whirling selves.

When I say that the Florese girls were beautiful I mean it truly; in the most intellectual sense of the word, if you prefer, in the sense that a sculptor would appraise a statue of cold marble. But these girls, thank God, were not of marble. Their limbs were as supple as young apple boughs, and their bodies curved with a liquid grace; their wide, wide eyes flashed, and their nostrils quivered with the passion of the night. How gracefully their tapering hands folded back the soft hair from their shoulders! When they plumped down beside me in the sand

A sampan in which to explore the Soomba Islands.

I quivered and laughed; when they trailed their pink finger-tips over my face I blew at them, and touseled their luxuriant hair in a rowdy fashion. Thus did we pass the night, eating, sleeping and drinking on the shores of the Flores Sea, beneath a moon that was our genial host and a lover of all good things.

I awoke the next morning, not in a pot ready to be boiled and eaten, but within a hut, frightfully bitten by mosquitoes. The natives were moving around as if they had been up since dawn, and I noticed that all of them, even the children, were wearing clean sarongs. In the compound was a group of men, and at their head was an old fellow with flowers entwined about his wrists and ankles, bearing a heavy basket. The women and girls began to come out of the huts with *poengoen* blossoms in their hair, and, together with the children, stood in line behind the men.

Every one seemed so preoccupied, and so absolutely oblivious of my presence that I asked no questions, but followed them out of the village along a narrow path. The leader kept throwing handfuls of dust from the basket as if he were sowing, and the entire company chanted a stanza of music at regular intervals. I suspected that I was going to see some strange religious rites, but I could not, for the life of me, understand the tossing of earth from a basket.

In about fifteen minutes' time they arrived at a clearing of loose earth among the palms. The surface of this circular clearing was unmarred by a single leaf or twig. Here, still chanting their song, the entire company squatted around the circle; the leader stood in the center, unceremoniously dumped the remaining earth in the basket at his feet, and flung the basket to one side. Then

he squatted down and began to scoop up handfuls of loose earth which he rubbed over his body. The entire company followed his example, and when they had covered their heads and chests they removed their sarongs and finished smearing the rest of their bodies. Then they began rolling in the earth, squirming and chanting; they dug their fingers into it, and buried their faces deep in it; after which they dusted off their hips and replaced the sarongs.

Now the leader picked up his basket and led the party to an open plain in full sight of a high mountain. Here they bowed down and began to worship the mountain with unmistakable devotion and earnestness. They sang and drew out each word to a great length, and I was unable to gather any meaning from their chant. It must have been a very ancient prayer, and in an indigenous Malay dialect. Thus they knelt and stood, alternately, in the hot sun for a good half-hour, after which the congregation disbanded and began to return to the village.

My Malay was not sufficient for me to draw forth a complete explanation of their rites, but I gathered that the earth was their god. To obtain its strength and fecundity, they rubbed earth over their bodies; and their prayer to the mountain was both a pæan of adoration and an apology for having utilized its body. That they held the earth sacred I am sure; for I saw no gardens of any description, and believe they considered it sacrilegious to till the soil.

My presence apparently made little change in the routine of their life, for as long as I stayed with them there were nightly fiestas. It was their recreation after a leisurely day of fishing; it was as much a part of their rich pagan existence as procreating many children or

worshiping the mountain. But four days of it were enough, and one morning, after a night-long carousal, I rolled some fish and rice in an old shirt and started walking toward the east coast of the island.

Flores, on the map, looks small. It is merely a dot near the end of the Malay archipelago. Compared with Borneo, Australia or the peninsulas of Siam and Malay it is insignificant. But try to walk across it. With a clear-cut picture of the island in mind, I started out with the laudable intention of exploring diagonally across Flores to a certain large bay that might offer something interesting. I was not particularly awed by the fact that there was a range of mountains down the center of the island as high as the Rockies, nor that there were cross-valleys and chasms which required a whole day to climb out of. But by the end of the first day, after I looked back and saw the village lagoon almost beneath my feet, I began to wonder if my shoes or my body could ever last through another ten hours. The country was hard as sin, and the air, about one thousand five hundred feet above sea level, was so rare that my lungs pumped like motors to get a good square meal of oxygen. My appetite was enormous, and the rice and fish I had so hastily thrown together as provisions were hardly enough to sustain a lusty mountain climber. The trees, overladen with luscious fruits that one pictures on every tropical island, were sadly lacking in these highlands. There was nothing to do but strike out toward the coast.

I started down from the mountain. The smoke of a volcano arose from behind the peaks to the south; and masses of gorgeous foliage rolled down to the seacoast. Before me was the sea, now a vast extension of the blue sky. There were no bird calls, no crashings in the brush;

only an occasional flight of green pigeons from valley to valley, silent and at home.

For three days I kept on toward the east coast. Each afternoon a kind of fever took possession of me and I was forced to lie in the shade until the cool of the evening. Sometimes when the moon was bright I walked at night. My appetite began to fail me; I did not think of food, and had scarcely enough energy to drink water. The beauty of Flores was lost, for I became too sick in mind and body to care whether I were on an East Indian island or at the edge of a precipice.

Over the low hills toward the coast I dragged myself, like a cow dying of thirst in the desert. My head throbbed, my eyes pained frightfully. Each effort, each motion of my body would leave me as lifeless as an empty sack. I despaired of ever seeing another human being; I realized that I had contracted some devastating fever that was slowly but surely eating me away.

But on the evening of the third day, more dead than alive, I reached a village on the coast. I remember natives moving about me like moths fluttering around a dying flame. I remember them bringing me into a hut and giving me something to drink. Then oblivion came, and I knew nothing more until I awakened, I think it was the next day, to see an old woman and a girl sitting beside me in the hut.

For two days I convalesced. Miraculously, one evening, one of my curious phases of perfect health returned. I ran down to the surf and had a good swim. I ate an enormous meal, and then I felt strong and ready to go. The past week seemed like a dream. I could recall nothing except dazzling sunlight, lazy swaying cocoanut-palms, and sharp stones that struck at me whenever I stumbled

and crawled across them. But now, I was tingling with vitality, full of the same eagerness to move on that I had felt in New York, Calcutta, Singapore and Java.

With five guilders I coerced a native into taking me down the coast in his catamaran. We sailed only in the daytime, losing much time because he insisted upon following every curve of the coast, putting into every lagoon, and stopping at every village. He must have had friends or relatives all over the island, for sometimes he stopped when the sun was directly overhead, always saying that a wind was coming up, or that there were no villages farther on and it would be dangerous to proceed after dark. But as the natives always gave me a good meal and played along the beach in the moonlight at night, I was not grievously disappointed. They had wooden xylophones that furnished a resonant music for the dances; and at night I would hear a thunderous booming that sounded as if it came from across the volcanic mountains. I knew it was caused by the great logs that were hung from the trees in every village, but when I asked the reason of Dako, my guide, he merely said, "To make men come." From where, I could not discover. There was no head-hunting or cannibalism in Flores that I was aware of, so I judged that it was a signal for meetings, marriages, or for the celebration of a festivity.

Another day of sailing down the coast brought no change of scenery and no curious natives. I knew well enough that I ought to be going into the interior of the island, but my fever was with me each afternoon, and to have tried to walk in would have been a repetition of my former disaster. In my condition, the only thing to do was to go back to Soerabaia as soon as possible and see a doctor; to be cured of whatever ailed me. I told Dako

to start back immediately. I told him not to stop at any more villages, and to cease following the irregularities of the coast-line.

We had left the tip of a high cape, and were beginning to span a bay, when I saw the tops of some cocoanut-palms rising out of the ocean to the east. I could scarcely believe my eyes; certainly it was not an island, for I would have seen the mountains, or at least a rise of land long ago. The trunks arose higher and higher; they waved and bent in the wind, securely rooted, it seemed, to the waves alone.

We turned out of our course and came closer to find not only that it was a floating island, but that there were human beings upon it. Two figures were standing in silhouette against the sky, and a third was sitting in the top of a palm tree. Apparently, they had not seen us, for they did not wave their arms or cry out.

My first thoughts, I confess, were not of rescue work, but of absolute wonder and amazement. It is common enough to see men on an island, but to see men on a floating island in the Java Sea stirred the myth-cells of my brain. What on earth were they doing there? Why didn't they get on a log and paddle ashore with a stick? Thus when the thought of rescue came, it was tempered by caution; and when, as we came closer, all three of the men disappeared behind the foliage, I began to suspect that we were very close to danger.

The island was fully two hundred and fifty feet long, and we approached to within a safe distance of the nearest point, which sunk off into the water a mass of roots and matted foliage. We felt nervous about going any nearer. The men did not show themselves, and if armed with arrows or poisoned darts would be in a position to

slaughter us, if that was their motive. We backed away, and were commencing to parallel the island at a safe distance when a black shape stepped from behind the foliage; two others followed, and I saw an immense orang-outan and two smaller ones standing perfectly erect.

Both of us were silent with astonishment. After we had watched them for some moments, we came closer, and the largest of the animals, an old male, advanced a few steps making hoarse throaty cries. He stared at us with his fingers touching the earth, his beady eyes penetrating my own as though pleading for help on the basis of our ancient kinship.

They were marooned on the floating island. They had been marooned for weeks, perhaps months; for there was not a cocoanut on the few small trees; and the earth had been torn up the entire length of the island in their search for grubs and ground animals. But we were powerless to help them. Even though their throaty moans and their actions plead eloquently for assistance, and, although they seemed too utterly helpless and woebegone to fear, I shrank at the thought of taking them ashore in the catamaran. On an impulse, not to test them, but to see how friendly they actually were, I told Dako to paddle to the shore. They stood motionless until we were but a few feet from a fallen palm; but as we stopped, and I put my foot over the side to land, the old male, followed by the female and the smaller one, lumbered toward us with such alarming rapidity that I quickly pushed off again.

I tossed four cocoanuts and several handfuls of cooked rice upon the soaked vegetation, but they did not appear to notice it. They squatted upon their haunches with a tragic silence, looking at us; and as we drew away they

began to moan like sick people. When we were a hundred yards off they howled piteously; and after the island had disappeared, and we could see only the feathery tops of the cocoanut-palms, their cries for help were still pounding at my heart.

Dako, for another five guilders, took me back to the village of Tio. I waited there a week. Then the sampan came, and twelve days later I was in Soerabaia, scarcely able to climb out upon the dock.

People stared at me as I picked my way through the streets toward my little hotel. They looked at me with a pained expression in their faces. A woman stepped forward as if to speak to me. The proprietor of the hotel did not recognize me at first; and when I looked into the little mirror in my room I did not wonder. I looked like a ghost. My eyes were sunken deep into my skull, my flesh was yellow, and showed every bone in my face. I smiled, but it was a ghastly smile; I laughed, and the reflection was horrible. "Ye gods!" I grinned at the apparition in the mirror, "what would you be if you'd stayed down there another month?"

But a little Chinese doctor, recommended to me by the hotel proprietor, fixed me up beautifully. For nine days he pumped gills of quinine into my arm. He fed me huge yellow pills and regulated my diet. In two days my color began to return. On the third day, when I perambulated around the streets in the evening, people no longer stared at me. And on the ninth day I told the doctor that I did not need another injection for my malaria was cured. I felt sinewy enough to wrestle a tiger; if the moon had fallen I could have thrown it back into place again.

Chapter Fourteen

THE AWAKENING

I WANTED to go somewhere where no white man had ever been before. I wanted to see a wild country, to hear the barbaric rhythm of paddles beat against the gunwales of a dugout, to hear the howling of the orang-outans in the jungle and the throbbing of a medicine drum. I wanted to explore, and set my foot upon land that no white man had ever conceived of. It would be the darkest jungle left on the face of the earth; it would be Borneo.

Since early childhood Borneo had fascinated me beyond any other name on the face of the globe. Africa paled before it, Siam and the Solomon Islands were mere satellites basking in the glow of its barbaric splendor. I had left New York hoping to go into Borneo, I had left India convinced that only Borneo could give what I so desired; and I had come up from the islands determined to travel into the center of Borneo if it took ten years to do so.

I went to the steamship offices to get information about Borneo,—where to go in, how to travel,—but no one could advise me. I went to a tourist agency, and the clerk looked at me as if I were mad. Borneo? No one ever went there! There were no hotels, no roads, nothing but water and jungle. I tried every trading company in Soerabaia that I could possibly find, and at last through the untiring efforts of the Royal Packet Navigation Com-

pany, I was put in touch with an old gentleman who had lived in Soerabaia for thirty years, and who had been most everywhere in the Dutch East Indies.

Borneo? No, he said, he had never been to Borneo, but he knew an old Australian whom he had once financed on a diamond-hunting expedition into that country. If I wanted to talk to him, he would send him around to me in the morning.

The next day, returning from breakfast, I found a small white-bearded man in khaki clothes sitting on the veranda of my room. He bowed apologetically, fumbled with his old felt hat and introduced himself as Mr. Graves.

"Borneo," he said. "So you want to go to Borneo?" He blinked his china-blue eyes nervously, and sat bolt upright in the rotan chair. Forty of his sixty-five years had been spent in the jungles. What greater oracle of adventure could there be? He muttered the word "Borneo" over and over again, as if each repetition of the name called up visions that he was powerless to reveal.

"It's been seventeen years since I was in Borneo," he began. "But I don't suppose it's changed much. The jungle ain't apt to change much in seventeen years. I was looking for diamonds then." He puffed his cigarette rapidly, and watched a *cheechuck* on the ceiling capture a fly. "You wouldn't think there was diamonds up that Baboeat, now, would you?" he asked, following the *cheechuck* with his eyes. "No, sir, you wouldn't! And I didn't either till the rajah showed me a whole cracker tin full of 'em. Big as pullets' eggs they were, and that clear you couldn't see 'em in a glass of water! He said he got 'em out 'o the whirlpools in the river.

"And did I go up?" he addressed himself. "Yes, sir,

I went up, and the rajah gave me twelve boys to paddle and a boy to cook for me. Hard to get 'em here,—you can say it is,—but a white man has a holy lot o' power in a black man's country, and he was glad to give 'em to me.

"Then he told me I'd better leave my guns behind, because they would make the Dyaks think I wanted to fight 'em. Aha! I knew that old rascal! I took the insides out of the rifles, before I left 'em, and tucked my revolver under my arm where he nor nobody else could see it. Never took no chances, you see. No, sir, never took no chances after I had to kill two of my best boys in New Guinea. . . . That's why I'm living to-day. That's why Carews and Jacobs was eaten up in the islands. They wouldn't listen to me. They was for makin' friends of the natives. No, sir, Johnny Graves, you'll never end up like Carews and Jacobs!"

He talked in a monologue, asking himself questions and answering them; talking to me, yet out of habit expecting no reply. Thus he had entertained himself for months, perhaps years on end in the jungle. It was fascinating, almost wicked to stop him; but I wanted to steer him along practical lines. I wanted to know all about equipment, how to go in, and the wildest places to strike for. Where, I asked him, was the best place to go in.

"Well, now," he replied, "I mostly went in from Samarinda. I knew the rajah there, and he always gave me boys to paddle. But there's the Barito River; it's larger than the Mahakam, and starts somewhere up in the mountains near British Sarawak. 'Course, nobody knows just where it starts. . . ."

"And is it wild up there?"

"Wild?" He repeated the word as if he had never heard it before. "Well, I never had any trouble. I always had a lot of boys lying around me so if the Dyaks attacked us they'd get killed first. Then I always gave handsome presents to the chiefs along the river."

"Well, who would I go to see? How would I start in?"

"You go see the *contrôleur* when you land at Bandjermasin or Samarinda. He'll tell you better'n I where to go, and give you some soldiers, too, if you need 'em. They may not let you go into the Dyak country unless you see him first and get permission. If you don't come out, you know, your government's liable to make trouble. Can you handle a gun?"

I replied firmly that I could.

"Hm! You mayn't ever use it. But tell the *contrôleur* you can take care of yourself. If you ever get up in the Punan country . . ."

"Punan country?" I interrupted.

"Hm! It was there I heard about the men with tails. We came across a party of young bloods that was out after heads, and they told us they'd seen the bivouac where these men had eaten and slept. They said they squatted down just like I did when they ate, because there were little half-circles in the dust where their tails had wagged . . . just like a dog's tail wags when he's happy. Would you believe that? Well, now of course it mayn't be true. But who's to know what's in those Borneo jungles? Those Dyaks don't know 'em no better'n I, and 'twas the first time they'd seen such a sight. There's jungle there 'twill never be seen by men, black or white.

"But did I go up?" he asked himself. "No, it was off my diamond trail, a hundred miles off, and I didn't

go. Some day I'll go. Yes, sir, maybe some day I'll go back to find those men that has the tails . . ."

For three hours Mr. Graves puffed cigarettes and talked to himself of Borneo. He told of the men he had killed, of the fortunes he had made and lost, and of sacred places in the jungle where the diamonds lay upon the ground like moonstones. "But you dasn't go near the place," he said. "It was death to pronounce the word!"

It was impossible to bring him down to practicalities; but when he left I was so completely under the spell of the great island that the problem of going in seemed too trivial to worry about. The forty-eight hours that separated me from the coast of Borneo loomed up like forty-eight years. It was enough to know that the place actually existed, but to realize that within two days I would step down upon its spongy shores with my own feet made havoc in my brain. Yet with dreams of head-hunters and pythons, diamonds in the whirlpools and howling apes, they passed; and on a brilliant tropic morning I boarded the Dutch steamer, out to explore the unknown recesses of a great jungle.

Chapter Fifteen

VISIONS

I AWOKE at dawn the next morning and hurried on deck. We were steaming cautiously up a narrow river clogged with water hyacinth, and almost overgrown by the masses of foliage that bent high above our decks. A big baboon with an orange rump glanced casually around at us from the top of a cocoanut-palm; to my right a splash of red and purple orchids stood out vividly against the deep green of the jungle. Overhanging trees and trailing lianas brushed our railings, and only the backwash of the steamer, swishing gently against the padded banks, disturbed the breathless silence that enveloped us.

Native huts began to appear, quiet brown children put out in frail dugouts to ride the waves we had created. A half-hour later the river became scattered with dugouts, covered sampans, and all manner of curious Malay craft. We rounded a bend to see a group of low buildings on our left, and steamed up to the dock amid an enclosing fleet of slow-moving boats, silent brown faces and bending palms. I was at Bandjermasin, the jumping-off place to the interior of Borneo.

At the one and only hotel in Bandjermasin I changed to my suit of whites, blancoed my topi and went to see the *contrôleur*. Like most colonial Hollanders, he was a keen man; his quiet eyes enveloped me from the top of my battered sun helmet to my worn, polished shoes. I

did not tell him that I hoped to cross the center of Borneo to the foot-hills of the Müller Mountains, for at that time the idea was but a dream; and military people, I believed, have little confidence in dreams. I merely said that I wanted to go in and have a look around, perhaps only a few hundred miles. He chuckled softly, asked me a few questions, and then wrote a letter which he sealed and advised me to present it to the commandant at the barracks. I thanked him gravely and departed, wondering if he had read my hopes.

I walked through the barracks gate in a self-conscious attempt to appear as mature and as capable as possible. Two native soldiers clicked their heels together, presented arms and saluted. I held my head erect. As I entered the commandant's bungalow another soldier saluted, and at the door a fourth executed a most impressive salaam, and ushered me into the presence of two military gentlemen. One of them was lean and rawboned, and stood with his hands clasped behind him as if overlooking disaster from a precipice. The other, a fine-featured man, pored over a map on the table. They seemed to be planning a campaign of attack, and were not aware of my presence until the attendant clicked his heels and departed.

The man at the table removed his pince-nez and glanced up. I handed him the letter.

"Well, well!" He shook my hand warmly, and introduced me to the gaunt meditating captain, whose lean face went completely out of focus in a huge grin.

"So you wish to see Borneo, yes?"

"Yes, sir! I've come fifteen thousand miles to see Borneo!"

"So?" The gaunt captain stretched his neck like a

heron and flashed a dazzling set of teeth, even and white, like the rows of buildings in Batavia. "Have you bivouacked in the jungle before?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I replied easily. "India . . . South America. I've trailed around through jungles for some time."

The gentlemen smiled pleasantly at each other.

"But I think you will find the Borneo jungle different, no?" the gaunt captain asked. "But that is good, if you know the jungle," he went on comfortingly. "It would be very bad for a new man to go into the Borneo jungle."

They inspected me silently for some moments.

"Where had you thought of going?" asked the aristocratic commandant, poising his pince-nez between thumb and forefinger. He put the question as if inquiring politely when I expected to reach Mars.

"Why, I thought I'd go up the Barito to Poeroek-Tjahoe, cross over to the Mahakam above Long Iram, and then come down to Samarinda."

They exchanged glances.

"But," I added, "I haven't seen a good map yet, and I really don't know which is the most interesting country to strike for."

"Strike?"

"To go through . . . to travel toward . . ."

"Ah, yes!" The commandant reached for a sheaf of maps and laid them on the table. They were merely large squares of white paper, traced here and there with river routes and dotted with red spots. I looked them over silently, unable to make head or tail of them, but I appeared so particularly interested in the white expanses marked "unexplored" and the dark river lines that came to an abrupt end in the middle of nowhere that the commandant smiled, and made a gesture. "Of course," he

said, "we can not prevent you from going into these places once you have started, but for your own safety we would not advise you to go beyond the military outposts. If, when you reach Poeroek-Tjahoe you still wish to enter the northern territory, Captain Van Holden will give you advice. But I think," he laughed, "that you will see plenty of Borneo when you have arrived at Poeroek-Tjahoe." And so saying, he wrote me a letter of introduction to Captain Van Holden, at Poeroek-Tjahoe, the most remote outpost in Borneo.

Both gentlemen took turns giving advice and answering my questions, both erect and splendid before my miserable, slovenly personage. And, at length, with an expression of thanks that was a prayer of thanksgiving to me, I shook hands and marched out of the barracks. With such extreme kindness and consideration in my favor I could not fail!

There were two days left until the fortnightly paddle boat left for Poeroek-Tjahoe, and every moment of them was spent in preparing for my adventure into the depths of Borneo. Remembering the yarns of Mr. Graves, and drawing upon my own imagination, I went to the Chinese bazars down by the river and purchased two kerosene cans of Java trade tobacco, ropes of red beads large and small, celluloid and metal bracelets, a roll of sarong cloth and some small files. For hours I wandered from shop to shop, picking up any small trifle that I thought would please a head-hunter's fancy—bottles of perfume, tinsel ornaments such as we use to decorate Christmas trees. The long jungle knives were too expensive, but I bought some coils of brass wire and a few small table knives. Then came provisions—tins of beef, and biscuit, bags of Java sugar, jungle shoes and a pair

of pants; all absolute necessities, and things which my dwindling capital could ill afford.

On the morning of the third day, with all my possessions for an indefinite period in the jungle packed into one wooden box, I boarded the paddle boat. It churned swiftly down the narrow stream to the great river, paused in the grip of the currents as if to orient itself; and, with black smoke belching from its single stack, began to push against the powerful current of the Barito.

The sky was dark and gloomy, expressionless of anything except the vast jungle beneath it. The green foliage crawled out of the sea behind us, sprawled over the soaked land in absolute possession, and closed the river ahead with a dark band. There were no shadows, no lights; only dark green water and a gloomy sky that brooded over the steaming mass of vegetation.

There was more tension in the silence than in the tremor of a volcano. It gripped me, made me one with the jungle, and left the hollow shell of my former self standing on the deck of the paddle boat. I had believed that the jungle had what I wanted; now it was settled. There was nothing for me to do but live with it, to sound its depths, to become one more addition to the countless millions of pulsating organisms that exist only for a brief moment within its unfathomable mystery.

The day passed; endlessly for Captain Treebles and the Catholic missionary aboard; short and full of meaning for me. The great cycle of life that was constantly revolving beneath the blanket of green foliage could not be seen, but I could feel its power as keenly as the presence of a danger. It was a magnetic force which was drawing me deeper and ever deeper toward the heart of the jungle.

One day the sun came out, a grisly smoky sun that glared upon us like a caged tiger. Crocodiles dragged themselves from the river and lay upon the mud banks, absorbing its heat. They were not crocodiles such as one sees in zoos; they did not belong to the world, but to Borneo. How long they were, I can not say. Perhaps thirty feet, perhaps thirty-four. They looked weary and forgotten, as if they had been spewed from an archæan volcano and cursed with eternal life.

For two hundred miles, the forest rose out of a flat dismal plain. The Barito curved through it in mighty twists and curves. Sometimes it took us two days to travel north a distance that could have been walked in an hour. Often we stopped at Malay villages along the river to take passengers and discharge a dab of cargo; and always a string of *prahous,* loaded to the gunwales with Chinese traders or Malay families, hitched astern of us for a tow up-stream.

Finally I saw a hill. It could not be lordly, for it was smothered with foliage, of which there were hundreds of miles in any direction. The jungle came out of the Java Sea, rolled toward the north, over this hill, and on to the China Sea. The hill was like a welt beneath the fur of an animal.

But that night the boat began to pant laboriously. I could feel her give and struggle with the currents. Some lights flickered on our port side, now to starboard, now directly ahead. We were turning and squirming around a village; and the next morning I found that we were steaming between low hills. Ranges of mountains stood off in the distance; the river was narrow, swift and dangerous in places. The trees were more massive, and taller, the red monkeys were more numerous, and the

heavy matted appearance of the jungle began to luxuriate in deep shadows and fantastic networks of lianas.

Hour after hour the hills became higher, and the river swifter. There were great pools, and stretches of swirling rapids through which we forged, inch by inch; there came islands and immense boulders. Curves of the river led us back and forth across the equator, and at evening of the fifth day from Bandjermasin a swarm of lights appeared directly ahead. Smaller lights moved hurriedly ahead of us, and flickering lights appeared and disappeared on shore. By the water's reflection I saw lengths of *prahous* and the shadows of men. We were in Poeroek-Tjahoe, the last Dutch military outpost on the Barito River. For six hundred miles to the north there was not another white man.

That night, as I sat on deck, I became aware of a steady hollow thumping that seemed to come from far off in the jungle. It quickened my pulses, and I found myself nodding to its pulsations. Captain Treebles leaned against the cabin in his pajamas, smoking.

"What is it?" I asked.

"That?" he laughed. "Why, that's only a medicine drum. Witch-doctor off in the jungle somewhere."

With the dawn I saw that Poeroek-Tjahoe was on a bluff overlooking a bend of the river. Tattooed Dyaks walked the main street, *prahou* loads of Siangs came up to the town with long knives at their waists, and crept furtively from one Chinese shop to another, like wolves searching for a lair. At the south end of the town was a barracks, a prison, and the bungalows of white officers, all surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence. On a hill, rising back from the main street, was a tall pole from

which hung the flag of Holland. Captain Van Holden lived in a bungalow beneath this flag; and at ten o'clock I went up to see him.

Two Javanese soldiers gave military salaams, and one of them was about to knock when the door opened, and a splendid figure in dazzling white, festooned with gold braid, appeared in the entrance. Awed to find such dignity and military correctness in the center of Borneo, I humbly introduced myself to Captain Van Holden.

His face lighted up like the noonday sun, and an immense red paw heaved out and caught my hand in a crushing grip. He strode into the office, read my letter from the commandant and sat back in his chair. His eyes were blue, and they danced and joked while working with fever heat to transmit clear-cut impressions of me to his brain. The epaulets, the gold braid, the string of gold buttons down the front of his white jacket; the way his neck overlapped the edge of his collar, and that immensely pleasurable, heart-warming grin—a grin that made me want to chuckle and feel terribly joyous—made me like him immediately. The very magnetism and warmth of the man suggested a profound sympathy and understanding. I could keep no secrets from him. I knew he would understand, and I told him exactly where I wanted to go.

I was not mistaken. Captain Van Holden was an adventurer to the core, a survivor of the early Dyak wars. He drew a roll of maps from a cabinet and laid them on the table, as enthusiastic as I over the trip.

"Yes," he said, "you can go over to Long Iram. There is a trail over to the Mahakam from the head waters of this river. But you won't see much there. The Dyaks have been civilized by Malay influence. You can

see just as much twenty minutes from Poeroek-Tjahoe, for we are in the center of the Siang country."

I was silent; for a moment, disillusioned. Captain Van Holden grinned confidently, cocked his head so that the plume shook, and unrolled another map. It was an old one, weathered and stained by exposure to the sun. He laid it carefully on the table, and pointed to a blurred ink line with his brown forefinger.

"The Poonýaboong country!" he whispered with glittering eyes.

I traced the Barito River from tributary to tributary to a blank space almost at the foot of a great range of mountains, beyond which was Sarawak. "Poonýaboong?" I asked.

"The snake-eaters!" he replied triumphantly. "The wildest men in Borneo! The *last* of the wild men of Borneo." He turned upon me quickly, his eyes dancing with brown spots. "They eat snakes, drink blood for strength, and take heads for strength. . . . They are the most feared jungle people of all Borneo! If you go there," he said, tapping the white space on the map, "you will see Darkest Borneo!"

"How long will it take?" I asked, thinking of my meager food supply.

He grinned, and the plume on his helmet shook. "Who knows? If the water is right you may go in thirty days. If the water is bad it may take four months. I can not say. It depends on the rivers."

"Will I need soldiers?"

"I will give you soldiers!" he replied. "Good soldiers!"

He gave me an empty bungalow and a servant, provided for my meals and ordered preparations made for

my departure. A thirty-foot ironwood *prahou* of Dyak manufacture was hauled out of the water and looked over for opened seams. Coolies to paddle were hard to find, but Captain Van Holden sent out scouts, and discovered four Malays who were willing to go. He detailed three Javanese soldiers, one of them his finest sergeant, as my escort, and gave me one of his native policemen as a cook and personal servant. But this policeman, when he discovered that we were going to the Poonýaboong country, left my bungalow one night and disappeared from Poeroek-Tjahoe . . . deserted the police force. Under such circumstances Captain Van Holden, without a word, gave me his one remaining policeman.

All the occupants of Poeroek-Tjahoe assisted in my get-away. Some of them had not seen a strange European for many months, and although the days were filled with the hustle of preparation, the nights were long beer-drinking parties in which we talked of the world outside of Borneo. They were a hearty generous group. Their choicest wines, their precious beers were thrust upon me. Everything they had that could possibly contribute to my comfort was offered, nay, more than that, brought to my bungalow by polite servants.

On the morning of the third day the ironwood *prahou* was loaded, and the officers of Poeroek-Tjahoe and their wives came down to the river's bank to see me off. Captain Van Holden, resplendent in his uniform, stood at the head of the little delegation. The others stood behind him in the order of their rank. The paddlers took their places, the soldiers tied in their rifles; and, after a handshaking all around, I bowed to the company, and stepped

into the *prahou.* A woman called "Good luck!" in English, the men tried to repeat it, and a marvelous cheer went up as nine paddles dipped into the water, and I started up the Barito toward the land of the Poonýaboongs.

Chapter Sixteen

FIRST STEPS

Eight brown backs bent over the paddles in unison, rising, falling, driving us onward to the monotonous rhythm beat out upon the gunwales by the No. 1 coolie. Naiowan, the powerful Madurese corporal, sat behind me, and I could feel the heavy *prahou* urge forward at each dip of his paddle. In the stern, an old Malay with a face like a walrus steered and took alternate strokes with a blade as broad as a shovel. No one spoke, no one smiled; now and then an impassive face turned in profile, only to nod once more to the rhythm of the No. 1 coolie.

Already, four days had been clipped from our journey, and the words of Mr. Graves were beginning to bear weight. On those sand-bars, said Naiowan, there was gold. The mouth of the Manghakoe, which we had just passed, held rubies and diamonds; and in this next village was a demented chief who possessed fabulous wealth in diamonds that he had got from the whirlpools of the Barito.

The village was a group of large huts, screened by palms, flanking the river-front. As we came up to the raft landing I determined to see the chief's diamonds and climbed up to his quarters—the central part of the long house—with a handful of trade tobacco. In the cobwebbed, worm-eaten interior was a collection of spears, blowpipes and head-hunting

paraphernalia such as no museum on earth could have exhibited. In a corner was a barbarically painted shield, almost covered with tufts of human hair.

I squatted upon the rotan mats, and fresh drinking cocoanuts were brought in and opened in my presence. I handed the chief the tobacco, but he passed it on to one of his sons. He didn't smoke, neither did he chew, and he opened his mouth wide to prove the fact.

My first attempt at trying to gain his friendliness seemed to have failed. We sat watching each other, and I was trying to think of some subtle way of presenting the subject of diamonds to his unstable mentality when Naiowan entered. He knew what I wanted to see. Point-blank and in very few words he told the chief that I had come from a far country, many, many days across the ocean. In that country I had heard of the chief's diamonds and had come to see if it were true. Furthermore, he said, I did not think the chief had any diamonds at all.

The old fellow arose quickly and tottered off to a back room. I heard him muttering to himself, fussing around. In a moment he returned with several pieces of white wood partly wrapped in an old cloth. He untied the strings, the pieces of wood fell apart, and into my hand rolled four uncut diamonds, the smallest of them as large as a child's finger nail. The other wooden cases were opened and more diamonds in groups of three, four and five lay upon the rotan mat. They were round, perfectly smooth—ground smooth by thousands of years of swirling in the whirlpool pots at the bottom of the river. The largest of them was the size of a dime; it was invisible when dropped into a cup of water. They were the most extraordinary diamonds I had ever seen.

Did he have any rubies? Any gold? Naiowan nodded, but the chief shook his head. He talked rapidly to his son and gazed stupidly at the floor. No, he had no *intan mehras,* neither did he have any gold; and to ease my disappointment he presented me with a fine spear. I knew, however, that I would see his rubies upon my return down the river. Looking months ahead I gave him more tobacco, which he promptly handed over to his sons.

So these were the diamonds. Where they came from, Naiowan said, no one knew. The Chinese had searched for their source and failed. The Malays had penetrated the jungle in every direction; they had combed the tributaries and dug into the mountains; but the diamonds were found only in the whirlpools. Many lives were lost in the getting of them. The crocodiles became fat, and the river ghost kept many a brown body from ever reaching the surface again. But eight years ago, when the water was low, this demented chief had commanded his sons to dive into the whirlpools and scoop out the débris from the rock pots. Fifteen diamonds were the result.

What could be more wonderful than to dive into a whirlpool, be sucked to its bottom, and come to the surface a hundred yards away with a glittering diamond? Although the river was high, and would have to recede twenty feet before a man could hope to reach the bottom, I waited at the mouth of the Baboeat, hoping against hope that it would recede. It might not go down for another eight years; but, again, it might go down thirty feet in two days. I waited impatiently for five days, and left, determined to try once more upon my return.

After a few more days of eating nothing but dried fish and rice I began to be impatient for fresh meat. The

river banks were overrun with boar tracks, but the dull booming of paddles against the gunwales frightened all game before we could approach close enough to shoot. My stock of tinned foods I wanted to preserve against an emergency later on. That night we took the reflector lamp and went out for wild boar; not ordinary wild boar, but animals as large as pigmy hippopotamuses, with enormous white tusks.

Naiowan, the two soldiers and I sat in the *prahou,* almost invisible to one another against the blackness of jungle and water. I knew that men behind me were paddling. I could hear the light dripping of water from their paddles, I could hear them breathing; but I could scarcely see them. Crouched over the bow was Naiowan, a black silhouette against the circle of light that he flashed along the shore and up into the edge of the forest. I sat behind him with the game rifle.

The great river glowed with the unearthly beauty of the night. The air was fragrant with the odors of wild hyacinth and poengoen blossoms. In the still coolness my nostrils detected a myriad of luscious odors that I had never imagined existed in the jungle; and my ears caught sounds that were transformed into vivid pictures within my brain. Far off in the darkness an orang-outan howled like a lost man calling for help; now and again a heavy crashing in the brush told of an animal that feared no living thing. The jet black foliage on either side of us rose high into the starry sky, holding the tips of its branches motionless, like waving hands frozen by the silence.

Slowly and more quietly we moved beneath the great trees that overhung the river. I heard a slight rustle overhead. The light flashed upward and revealed a

troupe of red monkeys dangling in all odd postures of sleep from the branches and vines. They moved slowly, clumsily, as if awed and frightened by the moon that had risen out of the river. Farther on, a long mud-flat, sloping down into the water, had been freshly rooted by a boar. The lamp showed earth falling slowly into the excavations. We drifted in, crept toward the thin growth of river bushes and began to flash the light from side to side.

There came a grunt, a crashing of brush to the left. I ran forward, and Naiowan played the light in slow, lazy circles over a gray phantom that hopped nimbly as a rabbit behind the trunks of trees. Maneuvering a little more, I steadied myself, raised the front sight into the lamplight and fired.

The boar disappeared before our eyes, crashing through the brush like a felled tree, grunting, roaring deep in his throat and smashing on again. We stopped, panting, at the top of a hill. The light had gone out; but below us, in the ravine, the squealing, agonized bellow continued. When we descended with the relighted lamp the boar was lifted upon his forefeet, ready to charge. Before I could raise the rifle to fire again one of the soldiers had run him through with the spear and slashed his throat with a long head-hunting knife. It was impossible for the four of us to carry him, impossible even to lift him from the ground. We left him to be cut up and fetched back by the coolies the following morning.

Two days later we came to the first rapids. In comparison with the rapids that we met farther on they were insignificant; but at once, three of the coolies I had hired at Poeroek-Tjahoe showed their laziness and utter incompetence. They were unable to handle the rotan cables.

They played with them as if they were flying kites on a holiday. Amat, particularly, was worse than useless, but since he was a present to me from Captain Van Holden I could not send him back. He was an irresponsible little fellow with a wife and two children working hard for him in Poeroek-Tjahoe, and each day thus far had been a holiday for him; for Amat, in spite of the fact that he had been a policeman, was not made for work. When the others were sweating over their paddles, Amat beat out a spirited tattoo on the gunwales, allowing the blade of his paddle to slip through the water like a knife. When the soldiers leaped out of the *prahou* to pull on the rotans, Amat pushed his straw hat on the back of his head and grinned at me. He fell into the water constantly and came up laughing, his hat fell off and he had to swim for it, he lost his paddle and had to buy another. Once he spilled a pot of my precious sugar, and several times, after I had taught him to cook rice to my liking, he burned it deliberately. A thousand and one petty mischiefs he performed, and when I scolded him he wept like a child, refusing to eat and falling into a state of despondency. But for all of that, he relieved the somberness of the party. He sent us unto roars of laughter day after day, adding a touch of gay indifference that was like nectar to the stillness of the jungle.

In spite of Amat, the *prahou* was pulled over the first rapids and dragged through the miles of shoal water. After a consultation with Naiowan, I decided to stop at the next village to hire Dyak coolies, for the great Keam Atas was ahead. We could not possibly get past it with the Malays.

The village was a group of huts near a *moera,* or inlet of the river. As we approached it a faint tapping noise

became audible. It grew louder; and we came into the *moera* to see an old Dyak squatted in a shallow dugout, beating a small drum. On the bank was a group of men and women, all of them very obviously engrossed in his actions.

We landed, but the Dyaks, to my surprise, remained exactly where they were. Beyond a few hasty glances in my direction they seemed to take no interest in the arrival of a white man. Their eyes were riveted on the man in the dugout, and I knew that something very unusual was happening. I questioned Naiowan.

"Booayah!" he whispered, pointing to the Dyak on the lagoo, *"Booayah, Toean!"*

I looked carefully, but could see no crocodile. I saw only a very old and wrinkled witch-doctor drumming with the fingers of his left hand, and paddling slowly toward the shore with his right hand. The dugout in which he sat was no deeper than a banana leaf, and it seemed as if the slightest breath of wind would sink it like a coin. Now he began to chant, very softly. The villagers leaned forward, pointing behind the craft, whispering to one another. Still I could see nothing. But gradually, as the little dugout neared the shore, I made out two small knobs about a foot apart following the witch-doctor.

The water was too muddy to distinguish anything but the eyes of the crocodile. He was swimming low and close, and with a single snap of his jaws he could have dragged dugout and Dyak to the bottom. By some miracle he was following peacefully to the soft drumming and monotonous chanting of the witch-doctor.

The frail craft brushed the shore, and the Dyak crept out. The two eyes, now plainly visible, came closer, three yards from the bank, and stopped. The witch-

doctor squirmed back a few feet, and after a moment the eyes moved to within two yards of the shore. Still drumming and chanting softly, the witch-doctor retreated; and the crocodile advanced until his nose touched the mud and his gray back was visible above water.

The drumming grew louder, then softer. The chanting became as appealing as an old war throat could make it; and the faces of the villagers were like masks as the great animal emerged from the river, and crawled upward until about half of his huge body lay upon the soft mud of the river bank.

I had seen reptiles hypnotized before, but for some reason I had never associated the crocodile with ordinary reptiles. With his armored skin and his mysterious ways he seemed impregnable; an animal apart from this world, and wholly unaffected by any other living thing. But the Dyaks were not ordinary living things; there seemed to be a common understanding between the witch-doctor, rooted to the darkness of the past, and this lone survivor of a prehistoric age. His nose was pointed directly at his enchanter, who came forward until he could have touched it.

Four men circled warily around the crocodile, and slipped a rotan noose over his snout, other lines were placed around his neck, behind the jaws. The witch-doctor beat his tiny drum in a frantic crescendo, shouting and dancing like a madman; and the entire village laid hold of the rotan and commenced to pull the clawing, thrashing crocodile up the bank. His tail swept the air like a storm. It was noosed; he flung over on his back, and with legs and tail bound into a writhing compactness the Dyaks carried him up the bank, and dumped him into an ironwood stockade.

He was an evil god. Three weeks ago he had taken a child from the banks of the river. Four days ago he had dragged a young carabou into the *moera*. Thus, to appease his spirit, the witch-doctor blew smoke into his nostrils and offered choice bits of venison and wild boar. The villagers addressed him respectfully in their own dialect, and hung pieces of cloth and valued amulets from the stockade posts. Within a few weeks they would let him go; but perhaps, said Naiowan, they would kill him and tell their gods in prayer that it was an accident, or that they thought he was an enemy disguised as a crocodile.

That evening, when all the men had returned from the paddy-fields, we climbed up the notched log to the chief's house and squatted upon the rotan mats to discuss the problem of hiring more coolies.

There must have been a score of head-hunters in the hut, shifting back and forth, slipping out-of-doors and squatting silently in the half-circle that confronted me. There were scarred old hulks who had taken many a long-haired head, and young bloods with bulging muscles. Their broad chests were magnified out of all proportion in the flickering torchlight, and the pupils of their eyes glistened like onyx. From the deep shadows beyond were sudden stealthy movements betrayed by the smoky glint of other eyes.

The chief, tattooed to his finger-tips, sat with his back as straight as a *tamar* tree, nodding, listening, speaking a few decisive words when a pause occurred in the conversation. Every one spoke at once, yet every one was listening and no words seemed to be lost. While one Dyak was asking the coolies if they had seen any of his relatives in Telok-Djolo another was explaining the

course of the upper Barito, and telling how three white men had been drowned in the Keam Atas. Two men discussed my clothes and wanted to know if I had any tobacco. The chief said that no one from his village had even been to the Poonýaboong country; his son added that a man from the Bahau tribes had hired three Poonýaboongs to get him the head of a man on the Mahakam.

Information and questions of the most amazing character mingled in the atmosphere; and finally, all of them concentrated on the subject of who I was and why I had come into their country. They talked rapidly, gesticulating, pointing to me occasionally and shaking their heads in wonder. Had I come to dive in the whirlpools? Had I come to kill the wild cow or the rhinoceros? To gather rubber? No, I replied, I had not come to do any of those things. But that was no explanation. No man would go through the Keam Atas just to look; no man would go into the unknown jungle above the head waters of the Barito without a good reason. They shook their heads. The white man was incomprehensible. They argued over my journey until long past midnight, and through it all myriads of half-wild dogs fought and howled in the rain outside. Water dripped from a hole in the roof, and at length a little Dyak boy with a parrot on his wrist climbed up into the rafters to fix it.

The next morning, with bags of rice and a bit of dried fish, three Punan Dyaks assumed command of the *prahou*. The bow position was turned over to a lean bob-haired man who looked remarkably like Robert Louis Stevenson. A stout whimsical Dyak called Tagoh paddled No. 2, and the third, a diminutive but very finely proportioned Dyak wielding the largest paddle in the *prahou,* sat behind me with Naiowan.

A new spirit was in the party. The Malays had been silent, almost sullen. The Dyaks started the day with a shriek and a war cry, churning the water with their paddles, beating upon the gunwales in a burst of good spirits. It was contagious; a coolie took it up, the rest followed, and before long we were speeding up the river with the enthusiasm of a head-hunting party.

At the first shallows the Dyaks gave a second wild shriek, lifted the coils of rotan from the bow and plunged into the river. They waded, almost ran, pulling the *prahou* onward with great speed. When it was too deep to wade or too swift to swim they clambered along the sheer walls of rock like monkeys, leaping from boulder to boulder, passing the lines from one to the other. Every difficulty, every achievement, was taken in the spirit of play; and in that one day I accomplished what had formerly been a two days' strenuous paddle with the Malays alone. I decided then and there that when we had finished with the Keam Atas, three of the Malays would go back to Poeroek-Tjahoe on a raft. The Dyaks would stay with me.

Finished with the Keam Atas? If I had realized what the name meant, I would have hired the whole Dyak village to carry us over it. An immense wall of rock overhung with palms was the left bank of the rapids. Worn to a casual bend by centuries of pounding water, it held eddies and great whirlpools to its sides. To the right were boulders, fallen from the mountainside, choking the river like the avalanche of a quarry; and through this narrow gorge the Barito roared in a fury of waves and spray. Nowhere was it possible to gain a foothold. It seemed inconceivable that a *prahou* could get above that gap.

We glided with the backwater into the very teeth of the spray. The Dyaks scaled a boulder and sat on its top, gloomily surveying the chaos ahead. The water was high, abnormally high; and they were planning a way to accomplish what, to me, seemed an utter impossibility.

Along the avalanche of rock, a feeble back current had been created by the terrific onrush of water in midstream. The Dyaks, pointing it out said that was the only way. It was perhaps two feet wide, and to allow the *prahou* beyond that limit might mean the end of my trip. I watched the waves leaping past this narrow safety zone, and prayed that the bow of our craft would not strike them.

The *prahou* was emptied of baggage, and the rotan lines stretched fore and aft to men braced against the rocks in the swirling current. The old Malay, stripped to the waist, sat in the stern with his broad paddle. Naiowan and I handled the middle, and the tall Dyak squatted in the bow with his legs clasped beneath a thwart.

The coolies pulled, the water tugged at our sides, but we began to move upward. A freak wave came at us like a wild horse, and a heavy paddle smashed into it at the bow. It heaved beneath us. The bowlines cut the water into deep wedges, and the men were shifting them around a rock for the pull to safety, when there was a loud snap, and we swung into mid-current, into a valley of water.

My heart took wing. A wave hovered above me like a great shell, and the next instant we were smothered beneath the rapids of the Barito. I felt the *prahou* smash against my ribs, I saw sunlight, a strong hand grasped my wrist and pulled me to the rocks. The stern lines had held, and the *prahou* trailed behind me, rolling in the river like a dead thing.

But there was no cause for despair. No lives had been lost, and no damage had been done. Before the sun had set, we had pulled the *prahou* from the water, and were carrying it bodily over the rocks. At sunset we were drifting in a placid pool above the rapids, looking for a high bank on which to camp for the night.

Do not think that this was the last of the rapids. We had miles of them, days and weeks of them. Rapids that made the first seem laughable; rapids which were absolutely impassable, and which forced us to carry the *prahou* around them through the jungle. But through it all the Dyaks were magnificent. Time after time they accomplished the seemingly impossible; day after day their paddles rose and fell with the precision of pistons. Nothing daunted them; for to escape the clutches of the river ghost in the whirlpools was the greatest achievement a Dyak could perform.

Once, however, in making a desperate attempt to reach a high bank on which we could camp secure from the overnight floods, we went under and lost a quantity of provisions which kept us bartering in the villages for days. It was hard to get food. The Dyaks lived from hand to mouth, and only my choicest possessions would induce them to part with their scanty stocks of rice and fish. When beads and files proved useless as currency, I traded my shirts, my socks, my blankets and a cotton umbrella that I had brought all the way from India. At one village the chief absolutely refused to sell us anything; yet we could see baskets of rice and smell fish and pork cooking in the huts. I finally discovered that, although he wanted neither tobacco, cloth, knives or anything I had in the way of trading stores, he had a profound admiration for my shoes. Dressed in them, he

would be a unique figure; perhaps they would lend a bit of the white man's power. So I took off my shoes and socks, and received three baskets of rice and some dried fish in exchange. He stuffed the shoes with leaves to make them fit, and cut up the socks to make a new loin-cloth. Wearing socks with shoes was, after all, stretching things too far.

But the most valuable trading goods, I soon discovered, were empty tin cans. They were worth almost their weight in gold. For two weeks I had been tossing empty tin cans into the river, or leaving them in camp, when I noticed a coolie working over a dilapidated corned beef can. He was smoothing the raw edges, making the top fit. It was for a tobacco pouch, he said. The next morning Amat cooked a particularly good fish to a turn in cocoanut oil, and I rummaged around in my baggage to find something to give him. My eye struck a green cigarette can that had only two cigarettes in it. I lighted one, gave him the other, and was about to hand him the tin for a tobacco pouch, when a voice said: "Dyak give two chickens for that box!" It was Naiowan, the one native with a conscience and a sense of gratitude. He knew my food was running low. He knew Amat had been gorging himself upon it, and hated him. I tucked the attractive green tin among my clothes in the kerosene can. Thereafter, when Amat unloaded my baggage from the *prahou,* he carried a collection of empty cigarette and hot-spot tins strung over his shoulder on a rotan line.

Thus, I traded practically everything I possessed until I had nothing but a pair of khaki pants, a shirt and an undershirt. Even my silver cigarette case I traded for a magnificent head-hunting knife (I could not resist it), twenty-six inches long, with a carved ivory handle, and

bunches of human hair sprouting from holes in the ivory.

But after we had left the village, the foliage closed in upon us. My beautiful knife, lying on the thwart beside me, was but a useless toy; my cans of Java tobacco and the roll of sarong cloth seemed superfluous baggage. Here in the jungle, only food—that which sustained life—was worth while. All else was a ridiculous attempt on the part of the white man to bring civilization with him. The jungle had no need of knives and files. It wanted blood and life. There was a feeling of suppressed motion, of cautious awareness, as if the jungle had laid a trap, and I was slowly but inevitably being drawn into it. I felt as if my every move were being watched by hidden eyes; that thousands upon thousands of eyes were boring into my back from the dense foliage on both sides of the river.

Yet there was no motion to catch the eye; no life to fight against. The distant buzzing of mosquitoes sounded from a far-off lagoon, simmering in the heat. When we stopped to eat our cold rice and tea, I became aware of the steady gnawing of ants in the hardwood trees. The jungle was breathless with the silence, and the sun hovered over us like a curse.

We cut through forests so dark that I could not see my coolies fifteen paces ahead or behind. The earth was a tangle of great roots and lianas that caught up my feet like live things. It oozed water at every step, and the moist air was pungent with the odors of rotting vegetation. Sometimes a shaft of sunlight disclosed endless files of ants, or a curious, scaly orange and black creature that moved slowly along a fat root. Leeches appeared on my hands and feet, and, feeling around the back of my neck, I could touch plenty of the rubbery things, fat

with blood. After a rain, the jungle was alive with them; they fell from the leaves like drops of water, and attached themselves to our ankles as we walked. And since we were insensible to their disks, we stopped in the shafts of sunlight to take off our clothes and shave them from one another's backs, and to touch lighted cigarettes to those in the hair of the head. Once I stopped cutting and rested, listening. I heard a faint hiss close by, and immediately struck out in that direction with my knife. Something hissed madly, fell to the earth with a thud, and attempted to scramble away. By the light of a match I saw that I had cut through the hindquarters of a poisonous lizard—a beautifully colored lizard.

Life was desperate on the jungle floor. It crawled and struggled to exist as it had crawled and struggled for a hundred thousand years. But high in the treetops, a hundred and fifty feet above the earth, was sunlight and vitality. There, huge butterflies drifted across shafts of sunlight like painted batiks, to be lost in darkness; immense boring wasps zoomed in and out of hearing, and pyramids of scarlet fruit hung from the tops of vine-covered trees. Life sprang from the dying in a blaze of glory; nothing was left to the imagination. Every dead trunk was the bed of eloquent orchids; air plants hung from the vaulted darkness like the chandeliers of a cathedral. Vegetable life soaked up the animal life, expanded, burst, and gave birth to other life. Ferns lived on the trees, air plants lived on the ferns, and from their hearts blossomed gorgeous flowers that gave their intoxicating sweetness to the myriads of butterflies and winged insects that were to die by nightfall.

We came to the open river once more and struck the sunlight. On the opposite bank a wall of limestone

forced me to bend back my head to see its top. A mass of palms overhung its edge, and from their midst a thin ribbon of water noiselessly fell six hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred feet to the treetops below. I looked back at the Dyaks, coming in single file with the baggage. The jungle behind them was silent; not a leaf stirred. Only their bloody legs suggested the life within it.

Chapter Seventeen

THE WHITE MAN'S WAY

At Moera-Djoeloi we stopped to send back the three coolies, and to kill fresh meat. The Barito branched off to the east. Its western tributary, the Djoeloi, was one way of reaching the Poonýaboong country. We stayed in bivouac for several days until the river had subsided, and with fresh supplies of smoked meat wrapped in banana leaves, started up the Djoeloi.

As we approached the Undanoem country, the medicine drums began to throb. Night after night the witch-doctors pursued the devils with their drums. Sometimes they seemed twenty miles away, smothered into a vague tapping by the vast jungle. The next instant they seemed to be only across the river, loud and vibrant. Always they pulsated with that light quick touch that no one in the *prahou* could locate.

Neither the Malays nor the Dyaks appeared to be concerned about the tom-tomming, yet I noticed that we no longer paddled close to the banks where the current was less strong, but almost in midstream, out of blowpipe range. And at night, although Naiowan said nothing to me, the *prahou* was hauled up into the bushes, out of sight of any head-hunters who might chance to pass during the night. It seemed improbable that there could be any trouble, yet Naiowan, I knew, was taking every precaution for my safety.

Bad water was keeping us within sound of the medicine drums, and on our third night in the Undanoem territory

I awakened to hear them pounding so loudly that for a moment I was alarmed and was about to awaken the soldiers. But the next instant they were scarcely audible. I determined to find them, to see what all the drumming was about. I buckled on my knife and tapped Tagoh and the R. L. S. Dyak upon the shoulder. Without a word they picked up their knives and followed me to the *prahou*.

For some time we sat motionless, trying to locate the drumming. It quickened the blood, gave wings to the stars, and a human note to the howling of the apes. It died away as if interrupted by a strong wind, only to come back with a sudden and powerful crescendo. The jungle seemed alive with drums, each one beating at successive and unbroken intervals; and it seemed impossible ever to locate them. In the darkness I could see the R. L. S. Dyak turning his head from side to side. Tagoh held a hand alternately over each ear, holding his head in the air like a pointer. They were finally agreed that the witch-doctors were down the river.

We swung down through the shimmering blackness, and the trip-hammer drumming became louder with each succeeding bend. The grunting of the wild boars, as they plowed up the mud banks with their tusks, and the feathery rustling of sleepless monkeys were almost noiseless by contrast. The air, cool and fragrant under the moonlight, carried the throbbings with a bell-like clarity.

They were all of eight miles away. The nose of the dugout pushed softly into the bank, and we walked through the soft mud to the edge of an old paddy-field. There, the Dyak located a trail that led us through a patch of forest to a second field. We made our way cautiously across fallen trees and stumps to the top of a

small hill. Below us, in a little hut raised high above the earth on poles, the witch-healing was going on. Pitch torches flickered through cracks in the bark; the drum pounded fiercely, and above its noise the shrill voice of the witch-doctor came in gasps and jerks, singing rapidly in the Undanoem dialect, *"Kya-mempu-kaba-kong, ka-ka-hoo-dah-kaba-kong,"* over and over again, each word falling beneath a pound of the drum.

The Dyaks refused to approach any closer. Those men in the hut were Undanoems, they whispered. They were many, and they were fine fighters. Perhaps they were preparing for a head-hunting raid. It would be dangerous to anger the Undanoems. It would be wiser to return to the bivouac at once.

They were not telling the truth, and I knew it. There was little danger of death, there was almost no possibility of a fight; and if there were, my Punans would be the last people in the world to run from it. They were held back by superstition, but would not admit it; they believed that if they angered the witch-doctor by disturbing him he would turn himself into a *kojang,*—a head with great flapping ears and trailing entrails,—which would soar down upon them like a meteor from the heavens, and drink their blood as they slept. For them to test the truth of such a consequence was worse than sudden death. I respected their fear, and crept down alone.

The hut creaked and shook, and I could hear the panting of the witch-doctors as they danced frantically inside. I was still a hundred feet off, and moving as quietly as a shadow, when my foot snapped a dry twig. Immediately the drumming ceased and the lights were extinguished. It was almost impossible to see the hut, and there was no sound save my own fast breathing, which I tried in vain

to control. I sank low, knowing that a blowpipe dart, like an arrow shot by instinct in the night, has an uncanny way of finding its mark.

After some moments I arose, and, without attempting to quiet my footsteps, approached closer. I called out in Borneo-Malay, the lingua Franca of the Barito tribes, but still there was no sound. I was afraid to approach any nearer; at the distance I stood, a poisoned dart could not have missed me. The scratch of a dart meant death within ten minutes, and from the size of the hut I judged there to be not less than six people in it.

Again I called out, saying that I was a white man from Poeroek-Tjahoe, and that the great white chief had given me medicine to cure the sick Undanoems. There was no way of my telling if a sick person lay within the hut, but it was a fairly safe guess, and the only excuse I could think of at the moment. I was right, for after some moments the torches were uncovered. I approached gingerly and climbed up the notched log.

A witch-doctor, glistening with perspiration, was dancing slowly around the body of a woman. In the dim torchlight she had a ghastly appearance. The skin clung to her arms and legs like shrunken leather. A great white ring had been smeared around her mouth and bits of bone, pieces of wood and strips of fur were tied in her straggling hair. Beside her, two more witch-doctors, a man and woman, both of them stark naked and striped with white chalk, began to pound a huge drum. Encircling me on all sides were the dusky forms of men and women.

No one appeared to notice me. The great drum began to throb, and as the first witch-doctor fell exhausted to the floor, a second one rose to his feet. His entire body

was covered with blue tattooings, strips of monkey fur hung from his arms and waist, leopard's teeth swung outward from his ears, and a pair of fish jaws clicked about his wrists. He smote the little drum with his right hand, thrust it between his thighs like a broomstick and began prancing up and down. He slapped it with alternate hands, rattled his knuckles across it and clicked the fish jaws, chattering the monotonous rhythm: *"Kya-mempu-kaba-kong, ka-ka-hoo-dah-kaba-kong."* Around the sick woman he pranced, wiggling from side to side, jangling his array of amulets over her face; around and around, rocking stiff-legged like the pendulum of a clock, beating the drum, chanting and gasping, until he could no longer stand, and fell exhausted upon the floor.

Immediately the woman witch-doctor arose, the third doctor sat at the big drum and the healing continued. It would go on all night; it would continue into the next and the next. It would go on until the woman died, until the devil was driven from her; until the three doctors were too exhausted to lay a hand to the drum.

I looked again at the sick woman, and it occurred to me that she was abnormally quiet. Her lips had not moved, nor did she appear to breathe. I leaned closer, and, with eight pairs of eyes watching me, laid my hand upon her forehead. There was not the slightest warmth. I touched her pulse, peered into her face, and drew away quickly. The woman was dead. She had been without life for at least an hour.

My first impulse was to tell the Undanoems, and the words were in my mouth when some guiding divinity checked me. I realized, a moment later, that I was nearer to death than I had ever been in my life. The fear of their superstition was two-edged; the instant that

they discovered the woman's death I would be blamed. I, an agent of the devil, had cast an evil spell over her. I had destroyed the witch-doctors' medicine, and killed her, and I knew that the Undanoems would kill me with less hesitation than they would kill a crocodile. I told the man that I was going for the medicine and would return in the morning. No one appeared to have heard me, and as I slipped down the notched log the second witch-doctor was arising to continue the healing.

The two Dyaks were still waiting for me on the hill and realized, by my gestures, that something had happened. We hastened to the *prahou,* and paddled back to the bivouac as rapidly as possible. Naiowan understood immediately. He put a soldier on guard at the river bank with orders to awaken us the moment the drums stopped thumping. But I could not sleep, and sat up with the guard, listening to the drums. Although they were still beating when we left at dawn, the coolies paddled the *prahou* swiftly and kept a sharp watch behind.

All that morning the medicine drums throbbed. The distance that we were putting behind did not seem to lessen their intensity, and I was amazed that they should be heard through so many miles of jungle, puzzled that they should still be going. It was incredible that the Undanoems had not discovered the woman's death by this time.

Toward late afternoon the drumming increased in intensity, and I began to think that either my nerves were playing me false, or that my ears had become unusually sensitive. Surely, I thought, they could not be heard this far off. I questioned the soldiers and the Dyaks,

but they shook their heads, and gave vague replies. They knew nothing, they said; they had never been to the Undanoem country before. But after another half-hour of puzzlement a thought came to mind that turned me cold. I wondered if the men knew it; if they had been trying to keep the fact from me. The drumming no longer came loudest from the south. For several hours it had not sounded in that direction. The drumming was going on to the north, and to the east, and west. It was *not* an auricular illusion; the message for my death was being relayed through the jungle by the medicine drums, and it meant that every Undanoem within fifty miles was after our heads.

I soon discovered that every one in the *prahou* knew it. And they knew as well as I that it was not to be a case of out and out fighting, for we could keep the opposite side of the river and pick them off with rifles before they came within blowpipe range. The danger, Naiowan said, was that they might ambush us at night and shoot poisoned darts as we carried around the rapids.

The first sleep was a nightmare. The drums kept booming constantly, and every crackle in the underbrush brought the rifle to my shoulder. There were no fires lighted, no one talked above a whisper. A guard was kept at the river bank, and another in the bivouac. I finally dropped off to sleep, only to awaken the next morning with the faint tapping of the drums in my ears.

It was impossible for us to locate the Undanoems, for the loudest drums grew fainter as we approached them, and the one behind grew louder. Once the tall Dyak caught a movement in the foliage along the banks. I cocked the rifle and waited breathlessly, only to see a wild boar leap nimbly into an opening and disappear.

The disappointment was greater than if it had been an Undanoem and he had escaped, for it indicated the kind of warfare we could expect from now on. Naiowan himself was as tense as a fiddle string, but the look in his eyes was a bulwark to my courage. He was a dead shot, and I knew that any Undanoem who exposed an inch of flesh would pay dearly for his carelessness.

That night we made camp upon the thickest river bank we could find. We kept watch in groups of three, sleeping and sitting awake by turn. It was almost morning, and I was lying in the bivouac half-asleep, when Naiowan crept up and touched my shoulder. *"Toean!"* he whispered, *"undanoem naik!"*

The soldiers were squatted low to the ground, holding their rifles in readiness. The Dyaks held their knives low, so that they would give no flash in the moonlight. Naiowan pointed to the brush along the river bank, and as I knelt open-mouthed, listening, it suddenly flashed over me that the medicine drums were no longer thumping. Perspiration came to my forehead, and my hands were so moist and shaky that I could scarcely hold the rifle.

Very faintly I heard a cautious sound, so soft that it might have been a trick of my imagination. But a moment later it started again. I became confident and steady; I had *heard* the Undanoems. I waited, eager for the sight of a dusky shape. I prayed that they might come on.

For a long time we crouched motionless. The Dyaks fingered the handles of their long knives. With the game rifle across my knee I visioned over and over again the fight that was to come: how I would kill this one with a bullet, how my beautiful knife would bite through the

neck of another. But still we waited. The sky became gray, and the dawn broke slowly. One of the soldiers turned toward me and smiled wryly. Naiowan bared his teeth in a snarl at the jungle. We had been fooled again.

But the climax was coming. Little depressions in the mold showed where they had knelt, and the Dyaks' keen eyes found scratches on the lianas made by their knives and spear blades. They had found us on guard and slipped away. But we knew that the attack would come before night; the medicine drums had stopped.

There was no use to make a secret of our departure. We kept to the middle of the river, in a powerful current, and in about an hour's time came to an impassable rapid. Naiowan grinned at me, and there was no need for an explanation. Before us was a walk through the jungle of at least a mile; it might be five miles. We were forced to choose the side on which we had bivouaced the previous night, for on the other side a wall of limestone rose up from the water's edge and crossed back into the jungle to bar any progress. We were forced to take the left bank, and the Undanoems were there.

Naiowan, another soldier and I did the cutting. The rest followed with the baggage. The awful stillness of the jungle was nerve-racking, for our ears were keyed up to the highest pitch, and at the falling of a leaf the coolies dropped their burdens to be on guard. Every few yards we stopped to listen.

We were coming within sound of the river once more when a scream from one of the coolies practically took me off my feet. I turned to see one of the Malays staggering backward, and the rest dropping to their knees behind their packs. As I rushed back, the Dyaks whipped out their knives, gave a bloodcurdling cry and charged

into the jungle. The soldiers stood their ground like wooden Indians, firing indiscriminately. I fired from the waist at a shadowy form, and felt a dart tug at my waist. I ripped it out; the soldiers threw down their rifles, drew their swords and we dashed in, not knowing where the enemy lay, but refusing to stand still and be shot down like pigeons. We kept on for a hundred yards or so, and then stopped. Naiowan, for all the deadliness of his aim, was helpless.

Three more darts came through the air. One went a yard wide of my chest, another sped by my leg, and the third stuck into a tree and broke off. The next moment there was not a sign of the enemy. The three Dyaks motioned us to come their way and pointed out the direction in which the Undanoems had retreated. We spread out fanwise and started through once more, the Dyaks and soldiers going in like tigers, each man for himself.

After a half-hour's fruitless chase and much blind shooting we decided that it was useless to follow them farther. Naiowan, the two soldiers and the old Malay were with me, but it was impossible to call the Dyaks back. Their head-hunting blood had been aroused, and it seemed to make no difference whether there were three Undanoems or a hundred; they wanted a head. We returned to the baggage to find that the Malay who had screamed, a young fellow called Amat, not my servant, had been struck in the neck with a dart. He had tried to draw it out, but it had broken off at the head, leaving the barb embedded in the flesh.

Then, I was sick with regret, and too utterly despondent to think of going on. In all fairness, my own life should have been taken, for it was I and only I who had

caused the trouble. In spite of repeated warnings I had forced myself upon a scene where no white man had any business. I had intruded upon the sacredness of Dyak superstitions; and one of the men who had tried to help me had received my penalty.

But we went on. We speeded up the cut through the jungle, and two days later we were out of the Undanoem country, paddling silently toward the heart of Darkest Borneo.

Chapter Eighteen

THE UNKNOWN

We left the Djoeloi and began to ascend still another river, the Boesang, which flowed through deep gorges, and against the walled sides of mountain ranges.

Now, a different climate began. The days were terrifically hot, but the nights were cool and pleasant. The rain came daily, and in fierce equatorial cloudbursts that raised the river like a thermometer. The valleys were filled with clouds; they blotted out the course of the river ahead and behind, and from a high point of land the jungle, so far as I could see, was snowy white, ribbed by the backbones of lofty, undulating, green mountains. Whereas we had been covered by mosquitoes on the Barito,—heard them rising with the morning mists with a sound that could be heard miles away and found them packed over our nettings like huckleberries each morning,—there was none here. But in their stead were veritable storms of invisible black gnats that filled our lungs and nostrils, and bit with the ferocity of red ants. And ahead of us, to the north, was a massive wall of blackness that meant more rain, rain without end.

We paddled by ridges of coal; pulled the *prahou* over coal so soft that it blackened the ironwood bottom; and in every bend of the river coal was in the process of formation. The rare gutta-percha grew thick and large,—the natives were constantly pointing them out with exclamations of delight,—scarlet fruits festooned the great *djamboe* trees, the sand-pits were flecked with gold;

and Amat, while washing the rice pot one afternoon, found a ruby as large as a full drop of blood.

Here was an empire in the jungle; a land massive with beauty and wealth. I was stupified by the towering greenness, the great cliffs, the brilliant orchids and the gold. Ay, here was an empire for a man to conquer if he could! Here, in exchange for his soul, was all the wealth of Borneo; a struggle against an overwhelming exuberance of nature that was always encroaching, never sleeping; growing on day and night to cover the land and meet the sea from which it sprang. Cut down a tree and three more would grow up in its place; make a clearing for your castle and in three weeks it would be part of the jungle again. Kill an animal and a million poisonous insects would be bred; have pity and you would die. Ay, here was an empire for a white man! An empire like a Turkish banquet, where all the food is poisoned.

For six days, traveling through this beautiful plateau, we saw no village nor any human being. Yet we felt that there were Dyaks around us. Now and then we came upon a rotan fish-line trailing in the current from an overhanging branch, and occasionally we saw cleared spots on the bank where a party of head-hunters had bivouacked for the night.

With the memory of the silent Undanoems fresh in my mind, and the fear of Dyak superstitions bulwarked by the vengeance of the witch-doctor, I became wary. And as we were in a country which even the Dyaks knew only by hearsay, soldiers and Malays alike began to fortify their souls against the ghosts of an unknown land. Whenever I killed a male deer or a wild boar, they drank its blood for strength. They picked amulets from the river bank, and at night hung them over the bivouac by

strips of cloth. Naiowan was possessed by visions of a great flood, and one night he awakened me by crying out that the river ghost had grabbed our *prahou* and was dragging us into the whirlpools. He aroused the entire camp by his writhings and cries, and the next morning the men refused to break camp until the sun had arisen above the treetops on the opposite bank.

Amat, too, was changing. His gay indifference to everything had vanished, and he was becoming somber. He said that he had seen lights coming out of the jungle and soaring over the river at night; he said he had heard the *tingan* bird call after sunset. Strange visions troubled him as he slept, and each morning as we packed up to leave he told these visions to others of the party. Even Naiowan, to my great surprise, seemed affected by them, and I feared that if some good omen did not come soon I would have difficulty in keeping on.

The sense of uneasiness increased when we arrived, one afternoon, at a Malay encampment, and heard from an unbiased source late news of the Poonýaboongs. There were three Malays in the camp; formerly there had been five. Four years ago, they, together with two Chinese, had come up with the intention of sending a raft-load of wild rubber and gutta-percha down to Bandjermasin. During the first year a Malay and a Chinese had disappeared, and not long after they had come upon a bivouac in the jungle and seen their heads stuck up on poles together with those of five Iban Dyaks who had come across the mountains to gather pitch. Not long ago, two more of the party had gone up the river to look at the fish-lines, and failed to return. The Poonýaboongs had got them, and with excited gestures the three survivors told us how these wild men tracked men down in

the jungle and shot them like wild pigs. Philosophically, they were staying on until their huge raft was loaded with enough rubber to make them wealthy for life.

Amat quivered at the news. With his imagination aflame he began to tell wild tales of Poonýaboong head-hunting parties. When I laughed, he cried; when I urged an early start on the morrow he wept harder, drew his hand across his throat and collapsed to the earth to show what would eventually happen to all of us if we kept on. He wanted to return to Poeroek-Tjahoe, and he wasted my food and did everything in his power to make the coolies revolt.

Two days later at Lioet-Moeloeng, the last village on the Boesang, his propaganda gathered weight, for the chief told us that a war canoe of Poonýaboongs had been seen up the river six days previous. Since then, not a man, woman or child had ventured outside of the village. The rice was left in the paddy-fields, the fish-lines trailed in the river and at night the entire village crowded into the chief's house in order to present a unified front in case of attack. Every man and boy carried a full bamboo of poisoned darts at his waist. Their blowpipes and long knives were always within reach. The Poonýaboongs, they said, were like leopards. They would make three raids within a month; then they would disappear into the jungle for perhaps two or three years. No one knew when they were coming back. It was impossible to venture far from the village with any assurance of safety.

There were four men in the *prahou* on whom I could rely: Naiowan the old Malay, the two soldiers, and their servant, a little Javanese convict who had been serving a twenty-year sentence for murder in the Poeroek-Tjahoe prison. The Dyaks seemed entirely unaffected by

Amat's talk of revolt, yet it was impossible for me to anticipate their moves or thoughts. Although they worked best of any one in the *prahou,* they invariably made their camp apart from ours. Their minds were flooded with superstition, and I was sure that if I made a mistake with them such as I had made with the Undanoems, they might turn against me. Thus, although they seemed loyal and a common danger bound us together, my ignorance of their minds made me distrust them.

Amat was the key to the whole situation. Naiowan warned him that if he opened his mouth once more, he would be put under arrest and sent back alone to Poeroek-Tjahoe. He kept quiet, but his silence was worse than his chatter, and the tension increased. I realized, more strongly than ever, that superstition ruled the native mind, and that the better I was able to understand it, the farther I would penetrate Borneo. The men were brave; head-hunting and rapids were their sport; but when bad omens took a hand, these sports became fearful dangers. Superstition lay at the bottom of every fear, and I knew that if I could gain their confidence enough to ease their minds there would be no trouble.

That night, during the usual palaver in the chief's hut, we heard of a strange animal called the *andai.* This beast, the chief said, looked like a great bear and hunted for rubber gatherers in the moonlight. It had already killed three men and a woman of their tribe, and seven Punans from the Moeloeng had been hunting boar with dogs one night when the *andai* attacked them. Four of the Punans had been killed fighting it, two had been terribly mauled, and the seventh had escaped. The dogs had been torn to bits.

This survivor, the chief said, told him that the *andai* was as big as a carabao. He had wounded it, but its drops of blood, falling to the earth, were transformed into other *andais* which arose and fought beside the great one. They traveled in herds, the largest walking ahead, and the smaller ones following behind according to size.

Another man spoke up. He said he was bolder than the rest, and had followed an *andai* toward a mountain that sloped back from the small river above the village. Darkness had come while he was still in pursuit, but he had built a fire and sat awake through the night with his long knife in his hand, and his spear stuck into the ground beside him.

The next morning he followed the *andai's* tracks to a cave in the mountain. From the top of a tree he looked down, and saw the bones of the men, and of many animals lying in the entrance. Returning to his dugout he was pursued by the *andai,* and saved himself only by plunging into the river and swimming to the opposite bank. The *andai* did not follow; it was unable to swim.

This, surely, was no figure for the imagination, for men had been killed. I wondered what on earth the strange beast could be. Borneo bears are tiny things, and there were no tigers (none had ever been seen) on this side of the Müller Mountains. The coolies were fully as eager as I to search for it, so the next morning we borrowed a small dugout, and with the two soldiers and two of the Dyaks set out for the river up which the *andai* had been seen. The Dyak who had been pursued by the *andai* refused to go with us because of the Poonýaboongs, so we were without a guide. No other man in the village would accompany us.

We reached the little river at noon. It was quiet, with-

out rapids, and we ascended rapidly. With the Dyaks paddling, I could hear every sound in the jungle. A flock of great hornbill birds flapped from the top of a *tamar* tree, and a distant buzzing revealed an enormous beehive above our heads. Several large boars rooted in the brush along the banks, grunting and breathing noisily. They sprang into sight as we passed, stared at us for a moment and disappeared like angry old men into the forest. Where the tangles were thin enough to permit walking without an excessive amount of cutting, we landed and followed the river until the jungle became too thick to penetrate quietly. At every step we examined the earth for pug-marks, and scanned the tree-trunks for signs of hair or clawing. We crossed the trail of a rare species of rhinoceros, but declined to follow him. His tracks could not have been over a day old.

For two days we went over practically every mile of jungle along the river banks. At night we paddled up the river, and drifted noiselessly back to camp, to see only wild boars, leopard cats, an occasional deer, and countless troupes of monkeys overhanging the river in sleep. In the bivouac I lay awake for hours, listening, only to be numbed into sleep by the buzzing and singing of insects and the tireless, staccato crescendo of the cicadas that made the jungle reverberate like a labyrinth of powerful wireless stations.

The river was alive with fish. They leaped up the rapids far ahead like flights of arrows, and their backs pebbled the surface of the pools. With my eyes closed I could have speared enough of them to keep us in food for two days. They were upward of three feet long, great white things with feelers, like a Mississippi catfish. Within a few minutes the Dyaks speared all that the dug-

out could hold, and prepared to dry them that night by the fire.

At a quiet part of the river beside the gravel spit I stripped off my clothes and went in for a swim. As I floated quietly, absorbing the coolness of the water, I became conscious of things striking me about the body like pieces of blown sand. I moved, and they stung my legs, arms and body faster and more nimbly until I felt as if an electric vibrator were fastened to my body. Peering down into the water I discovered a swarm of tiny fish attacking me from all sides. They stopped suddenly, and a vicious strike at my body told of a larger fish. Another struck at my leg, ripped away and bit again, and before I reached the shore several savage rushes were made at my hands.

On the bank I looked down to see a number of thick fish, wholly unlike the ones we had speared, from fourteen to twenty inches long, swimming rapidly to and fro in my bathing spot. The flesh had been ripped from my toes, and several smaller cuts were on my thighs and above my hips. I called the tall Dyak, who speared one of the fish without any difficulty. Its teeth were veritable canine fangs. Whole rows of them lined both the upper and lower jaws, sticking out at all angles like stacked bayonets. They were just such jaws as the Undanoem medicine-men clicked about their wrists that night in the hut.

We kept on, but could not find the mountain where the cave of the *andai* was said to be. The heavy growth along the banks shut off our perspective as completely as the walls of a gorge. Already we might have passed within a stone's throw of it.

At noon of the third day Naiowan and I were cutting

noisily through the forest about two hundred yards in, and the soldiers were walking along a stretch of gravel that lined the river bank. The hunt was beginning to appear hopeless, and I was about to suggest that we turn back when a cry from the soldiers startled me. *"Andai! Andai, Toean!"* they shouted. We rushed down to the river bank to see the soldiers standing among some rocks with their rifles leveled. The Dyaks had paddled to the shore, and sat in the dugout with drawn knives. From the gravel spit we saw five black heads coming down the river in V formation.

Two of them disappeared suddenly, came to the surface a bit behind, and regained the formation. They came directly toward us, snorting and breathing noisily with their exertions. When they were but fifty feet away, they lined themselves parallel to the bank, and gazed at us as if we were part of a side-show.

I burst into laughter. Naiowan grinned, for they were nothing but tropical otters. A moment later, disturbed by our noise, they rolled beneath the water, came to the surface near the opposite bank and climbed atop a sunken log where they again stared at us. They lived in the head waters of the small rivers where the fish were plentiful. The Dyaks and soldiers, never having seen them before on the Barito, and forgetting in their excitement all they had heard about them at Lioet-Moeloeng, recognized them as the terrible *andais*.

I was by no means convinced that there was no such animal as the *andai*. I had already seen too many miracles in the jungle to discredit the existence of such a beast merely because of its imaginative interpretation by the Dyaks at Lioet-Moeloeng. With old Mr. Graves I knew that there was jungle in Borneo that would never

be seen by man, black or white, and that there were living things within it that might remain undiscovered for ages.

But since we had no guide and were unable to find the mountain, a further search for the *andai* seemed hopeless. I wanted to reach the Poonýaboong country as soon as possible. Perhaps I would hear more about it up there.

We returned swiftly down-stream and reached the village by early afternoon. Everything was as it should have been. Amat had used up the last of my cocoanut oil, and showed me the empty bottle with great satisfaction; my remaining can of rice was only half full, yet Amat was no fatter. The classic touch, however, was the *prahou*. It had been left out in the sun without water in it, and the pitch along the seams had melted away. It would leak like a sieve.

The Dyaks started to work on it immediately, however, and by morning it was in floating condition, and we started on. The river had risen overnight, covering the mud banks, reaching back into the jungle and rolling by blotches of yellow clay and dead leaves. The great gutta trees, thick at the base like a horse's neck, leaned out of the dark water and spread their feathery tips over us in a shady arbor. Beneath their trunks we made our way up-stream, catching at the creepers that hung from their branches; grasping the heavy trunks with our hands, pulling them toward us, and pushing them away, like men shifting cargo.

We came to an entire village that had been deserted because of ghosts. It was almost obliterated by the jungle, and alang-grass waved above our heads as we walked toward it. The banana plants were heavy with

green fruit, cassava trees were plentiful, and gourds and several varieties of squashes networked the compound with their vines. Within the huts, spear shafts, unfinished paddles, poisoned darts, quivers and baskets littered the rotting floors; beneath, partly completed dugouts were being eaten by the white ants. But most astonishing of all were two medicine drums which I found beside some bark barrels of spoiled rice. These drums, the exclusive property of the witch-doctors, had been used in a last desperate attempt to drive the ghosts from the village. Failing, I judged they had been left there as bewitched. Certainly, the village had been hastily deserted. I wanted the drums very much, but Naiowan, who understood the Dyaks better than I, frowned and shook his head when I picked them up. The hint needed no explanation; I put them down hastily. They will stay there for ever.

With the fruits and vegetables gathered from the overgrown village, we were bountifully provisioned. Of dried fish there was no end, and for several days the coolies paddled with full stomachs. They had gathered a kind of lettuce from the alang-grass, which they mixed with tobacco and chewed, spitting the vile pungent juice into the clear water.

The next morning we were paddling in a blaze of sunlight when the bow Dyak grunted loudly, and pointed toward the shore. The river was "eating the sand"; a slight rise of water, perhaps a half-inch high, was undermining the bank with a hissing noise. The coolies dug in their paddles, the old Malay swung us around, and we headed for the shore. Before I had time to ask questions, they had drawn the *prahou* bodily from the water, and they were pulling it up the bank when a veritable tidal

wave came charging around the bend above. It came down the valley and passed us like a stampede, bringing huge boulders and trees with it. It was miraculous—unbelievable that on a clear bright day there should be such a flood. There was not a cloud in the sky!

To utilize the time, Tagoh and I went into the jungle to whistle for a deer. When we returned the Boesang was still rising, and with remarkable rapidity. The brown water roared down the valley; the high rock on which we had eaten our rice a half-hour ago was covered, and a long line of willows that flanked the mud bank showed only yellow tops that rolled and disappeared beneath the muddy water like dead things. It was useless to wait for a decrease in the flood. In the curve of the bend below was a *moera,* and to the left of it, a high bank, safe from the flood. The *prahou* was pushed off, and like a thistledown in a hurricane we were flung down the river. At the precise moment the old Malay in the stern leaned far out, pulling shoreward with his wide blade. With the grace of a pigeon alighting, we left the racing river and swung into the slow back current that bore us, without paddling, to the high bank in the bend. We had made a full half-mile that day.

By middle afternoon the Boesang was unrecognizable. The sun was out and the sky was clear, yet great masses of water were throwing themselves down the valley, taking great trees and undermining boulders. The tiny inlet was now a lake, and a ridge of rock that divided the river into two sections was entirely covered. Only the contours of the valley reminded me that it actually was the Boesang we were attempting to scale.

At sunset the river had risen eighteen feet, and a mark made on the bank showed that it was still going up when

we turned in for the night. The next morning it was raining, and the atmosphere was so heavy and dark that I could not see the tops of the trees that rose up from our bivouac. The huge butterflies that had floated above us the day before were nowhere to be seen; not an insect buzzed, not a bird sang. The morning was like a dim twilight made liquid by the rippling of the river and the playing of the rapids about the rocks.

In a heavy downpour I walked down to the bank, expecting to see the dugout floating in the treetops. It was far below me, swimming quietly beside a mud bank. I could scarcely believe my eyes. The world seemed upside down. The river had gone down twenty-two feet overnight.

Chapter Nineteen

DARKNESS

According to my map, we were in the foot-hills of the Iran Mountains, fully three-fourths of the distance across Borneo. The river was so swift and rocky that during the days of low water we avoided smashing the *prahou* only by exercising extreme caution. At any time now we might strike the Poonýaboong villages.

I was completely out of rice and had begun to use the soldiers' rations. Our plentiful supply of dried fish had been exhausted weeks before; and, with the exception of the few fish the Dyaks were able to spear in the rapids, we were living on a diet of rice, wild lettuce and cassava roots.

It was impossible to shoot wild boars, for in these mountains there were no mud-banks in which they could root at night. To shoot them in the jungle we needed a lamp, and our bottle of kerosene had been broken during a carry over the rocks. Tobacco was at a premium. Once a day I smoked a cigarette made of real package tobacco; the rest of the time I rolled banana leaf cigarettes of the vile trade stuff, of which I still had a full kerosene can. The smoke withered the orchids along the river, but it kept away the insects. I began to think that I had contracted some devastating tropical disease, for great red blotches were beginning to appear all over my body.

But there were more important things to occupy my mind. The river was becoming narrower by the hour, and

it finally became so small that we were unable to go any farther by *prahou*. We pulled it high upon the bank, lashed it between two trees, and began to follow a trail through the forest.

It was, apparently, a trail used now and then by the Poonýaboongs. The foliage practically covered it, and only a narrow strip of trodden earth and an occasional cut root distinguished it from any other route we might have taken. It passed beneath tree roots, between mossy boulders, and across fallen logs that spanned gullies filled with towering ferns and giant elephant ears. The trees and lianas were covered with heavy mosses; often I struck at what appeared to be a heavy limb only to have my knife flash through it like lightning, taking me off my balance. Foliage grew on a gigantic scale; the palms outgrew themselves in an effort to reach the sunlight, a kind of Gargantuan grass bent high above us, and lily pads six feet across completely covered pools of water. Once Tagoh called out, and I went back to find that I had passed within six feet of a python. He lay across the tree-roots like one of the tentacles of an octopus, but before we could strike a blow he had disappeared. Moving between the massive trunks and broad leaves we seemed no larger than the ants that one sees filing their way beneath clover petals of an uncut lawn.

I stumbled continually. My feet bled in a dozen places, and the blood made me a target for everything that crawled. I cursed myself a thousand times for having traded my shoes for food. The coolies, weighted down with their heavy packs, slipped and fell constantly. Some of them could not rise to their feet again, and had to be lifted like horses. Amat, after innumerable falls, lay upon the earth and wept. He did not curse the jungle;

he moaned, and the tears flowed over his thin brown face. I passed him. All of us passed him. When we were a hundred yards away I could hear him moaning a song to himself, and when he rejoined us at the river an hour later he was a mass of blood, positively crawling with leeches.

We could not follow the trail back into the jungle again. It was too dark, too slippery and too full of pitfalls. The sunlight was too appealing. We started along the river, clambering over the rocks. We waded in the cold water and soaked ourselves in the spray of the rapids.

Toward late afternoon a falls appeared ahead, and we stopped. Walking to the Poonýaboong country with all our baggage seemed an impossibility, for we had not made more than three miles that day. The coolies, although they made no complaint, were desperately tired and somber, and I was beginning to consider a fast dash with a week's supply of food when it occurred to me to have a last look ahead, one look above the falls.

I climbed around them and looked down. The river, to my amazement, was wide and smooth. As far as I could see it was unbroken by a single rapid. I fairly cried with joy. Now, we could go on! We could make a *prahou,* we could make a raft . . . anything rather than keep on through the forest! I started back to tell the coolies, and as I did so an open spot high on the right bank caught my eye. It proved to be a clearing. Not only that, but there was a hut in it.

It was deserted. The bottom of a dugout lay in the long grass, rotted to a stick. Inside were a few wooden implements, a bark loin-cloth, and some charred wood. But it was a sign of human habitation, and there might

be a village farther on, a village where we could get a *prahou*. I hurried back to the coolies, deciding to send the Dyaks up the river to see if they could find one.

After a consultation with Naiowan the next morning, I sent Tagoh and the tall Dyak up the river. The soldiers and the other Dyak went along the river to find a tree suitable for a dugout. By the next day we would either start off in a borrowed dugout, or begin to build one.

Perhaps because I was meeting the jungle eye for eye my luck changed. At any rate, the old Malay, while searching for fire-wood along the river, called out that he had found a dugout. I went down to see a craft lashed to the trees about thirty feet back from the water. It was a good one; not large enough to carry our entire party, but made for the small stream we had to navigate. We dragged it out immediately and began to calk the seams. Our calls brought back the Dyak and soldiers who reenforced the rotten gunwales and built up the bow.

Sunset came, and I was beginning to wonder if Tagoh and the tall Dyak had met with trouble when a narrow dugout sped past the bivouac and came to a stop in the pool below. It was the Dyaks; and we rushed down expecting to hear that they had found a village and brought news of much rice and dried fish. But the tale they told was far stranger than that: At noon, after having followed the Boesang a good day's journey by water, they came to a tributary that flowed east. They saw marks on the bank where dugouts had been drawn up, and followed the stream hoping to find a village. Suddenly they heard the sound of paddles, and saw a party of four strange Dyaks coming up the river in a single dugout. These men, they said, were very small, not up to my shoulder, and their hair reached to their

waists. All of them carried knives and blowpipes and had hornbill feathers in their hair.

These men disappeared around a bend in the river, but the Dyaks followed and eventually found the craft cached in the bushes on their side of the river. The strangers had disappeared. Without more hesitation they had taken the dugout and returned.

Now we had two dugouts. The fact that one of them was stolen troubled me not at all, for there was nothing to do but keep it. Inasmuch as the strangers were dressed in war regalia it was to our distinct advantage to leave immediately. The tall Dyak, the three soldiers and I took the largest of the boats, and the others took the small one. Even then, after leaving a full can of rice behind in cache we were overloaded. But we made a start, pulling the dugouts with rotan lines whenever the water was shallow enough and always keeping a sharp lookout for trouble.

The excitement of our getaway—the hut, the broad river, the trail and the strange Dyaks—made me feel that we were near the Poonýaboong country. The coolies seemed to feel so, too, for their paddle strokes were shorter and almost noiseless. They no longer called out when they sighted a fine gutta-percha tree or a bee's hive; their eyes were focused on the bends ahead.

And our intuitions were right, for the next morning as we were drifting in the backwater of a pool a dugout appeared at the head of the rapid above us. It poised for an instant, paddles flashed in the sunlight and the craft galloped lightly down the swift water into the pool below. The occupants of the craft had not seen us, for when Naiowan shouted they straightened up, glancing about. Recognizing us as friendly they came alongside.

Three men were paddling. A fourth, and the one who had caught my eye immediately I saw them, was seated in the deep bottom of the dugout. He was wild; without doubt, the most savage and primitive human being I had ever seen. His grayish-black hair was matted like seaweed and straggled thinly over his shoulders. His body was like wrinkled sole leather, laced with blue tattooing. His feet were distorted, and the lobes of his ears hung in shreds. I wondered if he could speak, if he could utter any sounds besides unintelligible gutturals. With his heavy face, expressionless eyes and bowed legs he looked like an old orang-outan. Put into the water he would swim like a cat; once ashore, I was sure, he could crawl up a tree and peer at me behind a limb. Even a dugout was too civilized for this creature. He looked as if he had been dug out of the jungle.

My own Dyaks talked with the three paddlers. They were small, but very finely knit men with aquiline noses and lean features. All had black hair reaching to their waists, and, like the mute figure between them, were elaborately tattooed and naked except for a soft bark loin-cloth. They held themselves proudly and spoke very little, noting carefully the contents of our dugouts, particularly the barrels of the short service rifles that protruded like black fangs above the gunwales. They seemed in a hurry to leave, and as the scanty forced conversation died out dipped in their paddles and swung into the current. I was immensely impressed, and wondered from which tribe they had come. I asked Naiowan.

"Poonýaboong!" he replied; and eight heads, bending over their paddles, turned toward me and nodded.

How close we were to the village no one knew. Each succeeding bend of the river held a hope; each hour was

a rising flood of expectation. I had already imagined what the village would be like, and for the hundredth time I planned what I would do when we arrived; how I would enter, what I would do by way of communication. I hid my excitement from Naiowan and the coolies behind a pair of slumped shoulders, and eyes that glanced casually from bend to foliage and from foliage to bend; but my hands, from the force of my imagination, fingered the rifle constantly.

On the third day, with my excitement at fever pitch, we were paddling toward a bend in a drizzling rain when my eye caught a flash of red on the left bank. At first I thought it was a flower, or perhaps a fruit, but in a moment we were abreast of it, and I saw a piece of red cloth hanging bannerwise from a tall pole. Behind it were a number of oblong shapes, almost concealed by the foliage.

I ordered the dugout to the bank, and climbed up. A basket, fallen away with rottenness, spilled crude beads and bamboo vials of poison among the sodden leaves. A blowpipe protruded from the top of one barbarically painted coffin; farther back were perhaps a dozen, carved in the shape of dugouts and raised high off the ground on poles. Scattered beneath these coffins were shields, a brass gamelan, cooking vessels.

A guarded shout from Naiowan brought me up with a shock; made my scalp tingle. I rushed down to see the soldiers with their rifles in their hands, Naiowan standing up with a paddle and the other dugout almost concealed behind some branches on the other side of the river.

"Poonýaboong village!" he whispered hoarsely.

I looked at the other dugout. The Dyaks were staring straight up the river. One of them saw me and pointed.

On a hill, not three hundred yards distant, was a small hut, partly hidden behind a clump of banana plants. As I looked, a naked child appeared in the doorway. It vanished, and a man came out holding a blowpipe in his hand. More huts came into view, and the noise of our paddles frightened some women and children who appeared in the compound and ran up the notched logs of the huts. Another group, too frightened to attempt to run remained half concealed in the banana plants.

There was not the slightest sign of hostility. We came abreast of the five huts to see the roofs of a second village rising above the grass on the right bank. A few crude dugouts lay on the gravel beach. Still there was no greeting, no sound or movement. We landed quietly, and I glanced up to see a file of naked savages staring down at us from the high bank. They did not move, and their faces were expressionless; they stared at us like wooden statues.

I gave no thought to my rifle. Before that wooden stare and the poisoned darts that I knew could come singing through the air in a flash, it seemed of no more use than a broomstick. I took a handful of trade tobacco and began to climb up.

My legs felt hollow. I slipped, regained my balance and smiled up at them. Apparently, they had never seen a man smile before. I came closer, held out the tobacco and stepped upon the bank. The balconies of huts beyond were lined with the dusky forms of men armed to the teeth with knives and blowpipes. I held the tobacco closer, and tried to smile again.

A squat scaly savage reached out, took the tobacco and placed it under his armpit. The rest of them looked at me stolidly. Their eyes were as unfathomable as

oceans. All the plans that I had made forsook me; I could only stare at them and try to smile. Better a thousand times was a fight than this strange introduction in which they offered nothing, beyond cold stares backed up by the armed men in the huts beyond.

Naiowan and the soldiers came up. The Dyaks followed. As Tagoh began to speak in the Undanoem dialect the lightning crackled and spat over our heads, the thunder bellowed and the rain swept down the valley like a tidal wave. It blotted out the jungle around us, the huts, and even the men beneath them. Suddenly the savages before us began to move. Tagoh motioned me to follow, and led the way to a small hut. As I sat inside, wondering what would happen next, nine dusky figures with milk-white tusks of ivory in their ears squatted outside in the rain, watching me.

Chapter Twenty

THE DIRGE

We must have stared at one another for an hour. I fumbled over my trading stores, allowed mirrors to flash, and ran strings of red beads through my fingers so that they could see them. Their eyes gave no hint of friendly advances; but I hoped the sight of my wealth would inspire them to take an interest in me, at least.

I replaced the trading goods carefully, and was wondering what I could do next when a wiry little savage crept noiselessly up the entrance log and laid a basket on the floor in front of me. He squatted over it, lifted the lid, and took out three hens' eggs which he offered to me from his outstretched hand. Eggs, the food of the Dyak gods! He was the Poonýaboong witch-doctor, and his present of this rare food meant that I was an esteemed visitor, an honored friend of the tribe.

I gave him a handful of tobacco; I gave a big handful to the chief, and passed tobacco to each of the dusky shapes that followed him into my hut. The tension following my arrival was broken. I was easier in mind, and felt that I could spend the night in peace. But with my experience with the Undanoem still fresh in my mind I determined to keep up my reserve and to make no intrusions. I would move among them like a cat over thin ice, for I feared that if I brushed by a sacred tree or blundered into some holy ritual I might never see the sun rise again.

They were powerful men, deep-chested and heavily muscled, yet it was only after I had stood beside them that

I realized how small they really were. The chief, who was the tallest man in the tribe, came almost to my shoulder. His body was covered with blue tattooings and his legs were wrapped above the calf with black roots, which, I afterward learned, were to impart strength to the body. A pair of leopard's teeth in his ears, purple with age, were his only adornment. The other men's ears hung down to their shoulders from the weight of gold earrings, their hair draped loosely above their shoulders, and their skins reminded me of leather creased and polished by long use. I could see no women or children, but knew that they were inside the huts.

The village was not so large as my first impression had led me to believe. In the center of the expanse of beaten clay that spread back from the river bank was the house of the chief, tottering ten feet above the earth on posts of ironwood. Four smaller huts, almost fallen apart from lack of repair, leaned against it from the east side; three more with great strips of bark hanging from their sides supported it from the west; and a small half-circle of dwellings tied together like old chicken houses extended toward the north. The notched logs leading up to the huts were worn almost smooth from constant use; crazily made platforms extended over the compound on a level with the floors, and the natives perched on these slender posts and rotten boards like a flock of blackbirds, watching me inspect their village. I thought it best not to obtrude myself too much the first day, so when sunset came I went back into my hut to eat and sleep.

But I could not sleep. I lay awake wondering what the Poonyaboongs were thinking, and what the next day would bring forth. The cicadas carried on with their noisy crescendos, Naiowan was bandaging a cut in his

foot, and an immense glowworm was moving across a rafter above me like a distant ship passing in the night. The coolies were talking softly among themselves, and I was beginning to feel the strange quietness of the village myself, when a mingling of musical sounds arose out of the silence, lingered for a moment and faded. Before I could sit up they began again, blending one into the other, broken, but beautiful, as if a child were fingering the stops of an organ.

I became rigid with attention; I almost stopped breathing. Tagoh raised himself attentively on one elbow, nodding his head to the queer rhythm that broke off, started up again and stopped as quickly. Softly, and scarcely audible, came the patting of feet upon wet clay.

"Poonýaboongs are playing," whispered Naiowan.

I arose quickly and went outside to see a group of shadowy figures moving in silhouette against a torchlight. White-tipped hornbill feathers flashed in their hair, and the ivory handles of their long knives jerked up and down as they raised and lowered their arms to the rhythm of the dance. With a stamping, almost careless gait they disappeared into the darkness, only to come into silhouette again before the torch to the strange melodies of the beautiful instrument and a soft clapping of hands that came like the lapping of waves from the porches of the hut.

As I came closer I saw a half-circle of people enclosing the dancers. Squatted in the deep shadows were others. The balconies of the huts and the platforms were lined with old men and old women, children and babes. The file of dancers came once more into the light, and I saw the leader, the tallest of the group, holding a gourd with reeds sticking up from it. He fingered it after the man-

ner of a flute, the normal rise and fall of his great chest undisturbed by the steady breaths that were being transformed into intoxicating music.

Suddenly the dancers stopped. The half-circle of people contracted slowly, and squatted around two shields that had been laid upon the ground. The soft music recommenced, and as the proper rhythm was reached two young Poonýaboongs leaped into the circle, swept the shields from the earth and faced each other. They balanced, swayed to the music and crouched. Knives flashed from their scabbards, and, slowly approaching the center, they sliced the air before them as if clipping off the ankles of an attacking foe. They stopped, and with the fastidious care of serpents uncoiled themselves at each other, writhing to the soft droning of the reeds, to the memories of enemies from the Mahakam. Now swift, swift as leaping trout their bodies flashed in the torchlight, and swords that had tasted Sarawak blood skimmed over every surface of the other's body, came within a hair's breadth of head-hunting. They danced upon alternate legs, shifting the shield with each move; they leaped and, turning in midair, brought the keen blades down upon the neck of an imaginary foe. They became rigid, then relaxed, moving hands and feet in a kind of muscle dance to the music. Then, with the shields held aloft and the knives pointed to the stars, both warriors bent backward until their heads touched the earth.

By a great effort I kept myself from leaping into the circle with them, a *mandau* at my waist and ivory in my ears. I forgot that I was a white man among head-hunters; the music and the dance were hypnotic, and had sent me back to the time when my ancestors took their judgment from the moon and their philosophy from blood.

Since my color was white I did not dance. I shouted, clapped and went into all the mad exclamations of delight typical of Occidentals. And some of the Poonýaboongs grinned. But most of them were silent, amazed at the white man who lost his head at the sight of naked knives.

There was no breathing space, for when the first two warriors stopped, two more, bow-legged and tattooed, old and mangy, began a second dance. They were unadorned by hornbill feathers and leopard skins. Their hair floated over their squat bodies like a cloak. They used their shield and *mandau* deftly and surely, as an artist uses color. Every muscle, every gesture had been trained to accord instantly with the subtlest whim of the gourd and reeds. They were two of the old school, and their dance was clean-cut; vicious but beautiful.

The young men began their jogging war-dance once more, and the women and children danced in slow oblivious groups at one side, shuffling noiselessly, lifting and lowering the arms as if flying. I was trying in vain to extract and remember a single tune from the ceaseless droning of the instrument when the foremost of the dancers stopped, missed a step and started on. Others shuffled eagerly, nodding toward the river bank. I glanced to the right, but through the darkness could see nothing. A few moments later there was a splash, as of a foot stepping into the water, the light knock of a paddle against a gunwale. A voice hallooed, and one of the Poonýaboongs answered.

A dusky blur appeared at the top of the river bank, moving toward us; and from the darkness emerged a long line of men and women in war feathers jogging forward, swaying in line and chanting softly. The Poonýaboongs across the river had come to join in the dance.

Four gourd instruments mingled their multitudinous notes, and lines of men, women and children circled about the compound, laughing and stamping, clapping their hands and beckoning the onlookers to join in. Old women came down the notched logs from the huts; men too feeble to work in the paddy-fields crept to the edge of the circle, and sat with the torchlight reflected in their eyes. The dance became a circus, a swirling panorama of excitement, good humor and barbarism. Witch-doctors, smeared with soot and striped with white chalk, performed their mad antics beneath my feet, screaming and clawing the earth like poisoned leopards. Three yards away a file of women with moon faces were absorbed in the casual grace of floating arms, the charm of a carefully placed foot. Two small boys battled with wooden swords; another scraped mud from the earth and threw it into the air, grinning and looking for applause. It was childish and weird, colossally mad. It was done to the soft drunkenness of an organ-like music.

So these were the Poonýaboongs—snake-eaters, blood-drinkers, savages who shot down men in the jungle like wild pigs; here they were, laughing and gesticulating, dancing under the moon, not to the barbaric thunder of drums, but to subtle harmonies that only a poet could conceive. I turned into the blackness toward my hut and heard once again the scream of the cicadas, the restless buzzing of the insects, the crawling and growing of the jungle. I remembered my bloody legs, the swarming leeches, the whirlpools, the floods and the great fourteen-hour silences from dawn to sunset. I reached the hut, and looked at the Poonýaboongs once more. They were still singing, and their music was like a dirge chanted in the face of destruction.

Chapter Twenty-One

ANCESTORS

I WENT through the huts of the village the next day. I broke through floor boards, stumbled over old men and women who slept beside the smoking fire-boxes; and at every step I was followed and nipped at by lean dogs and stared at by lynx-eyed Poonýaboongs. The women and the children fled at my approach, threw themselves on the floor and covered their heads with shreds of bark and cloth. Little boys whimpered, and old men who had been asleep for years, it seemed, rose up on an elbow, stared at me in wonder and sank back to the floor.

Being almost completely out of food, I began to trade. Empty tin cans, as Naiowan had predicted, were the most prized of my stores. For an old beef tin I received a full basket of rice; an empty chocolate box enameled a brilliant yellow brought a small basket of boar meat, several strips of smoked python and more rice. Red beads were highly prized. A string of them would buy practically anything in the village; and when I began to run short of them, I broke the strings and traded them singly, using them as currency. Bottles of perfume were useless until one woman accidently broke a bottle and discovered what was inside. Then perfume rose on a par with beads, and about twenty women mustered up courage enough to come within ten feet of me holding out charms, leopards' teeth, bananas, chickens—anything they possessed—in exchange for perfume. I had some little mirrors with the portrait of Queen Wilhelmina

stamped on the back, but no man or woman wanted them. One man looked at himself in a mirror and passed it back gravely; another did the same, I could not even give them away as presents. Files and sarong cloth, I knew, would have created a panic. But I did not display them until my goods of lesser value were exhausted. Even then, I traded only a small portion, keeping the rest to tide me over on my way down the river.

One woman had an unusually sweet face, and eyes that held a surprising depth of understanding. She embarrassed me very much. When I gave five beads for some rice she looked at me as if to say, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, trading a few trifling bits of glass for food which has taken days of hard labor to produce?" Nevertheless, she, too, was eager for red beads, but as she did not bargain with me I gave her a handful of them and a string of tinsel beads and some Christmas ornaments besides. She smiled at me in a sweet motherly way, looking me full in the eyes; and for some time I stood beside her to admire a rain hat which she was plaiting of stained palm leaves. She showed me just how she intended to use the beads in a decoration around the hat.

The two old men who had danced so beautifully the night before, however, were as unscrupulous as I. They followed me around the village like cats, scratching their scaly bodies and rubbing themselves with little pieces of wood. One of them had cut up a tin can I had traded, and bound the strips of tin about his legs in the belief that it would give him strength. The other one carried a little banana leaf cigarette in a hole in his ear. They made a great pair to look at, but I would not have trusted myself with them outside the village unless they were in a cage.

The Poonýaboongs, I discovered, made neither their knives nor their blowpipes. They secured them by trade from tribes on the Mahakam River. But with these long ironwood tubes they were amazingly proficient. Five of them, at my request, stood off at a hundred-odd feet and leveled their blowpipes at a disk of wood that I had placed against a palm tree. They held them like rifles, aimed and took a deep breath. Suddenly, the disk of wood looked like a pincushion. Some of the bamboo darts, sharp as needles, had penetrated the wood an inch deep. Others, from the great force, had stuck in and broken off. I realized, then, how fortunate I was in having been shot at by Undanoems instead of Poonýaboongs; and did not wonder they were hired by other tribes to take heads for them.

Their poison, my own Dyaks told me, was the deadliest used by any tribe in Borneo, but no one but themselves knew the secret of its deadliness. One afternoon, however, while visiting the village across the river to trade some tin cans for a blowpipe, I noticed a young Poonýaboong smearing some darts. He was squatted over a large basin-shaped stone which was propped over a tiny fire; and in the hollow of the stone was a smoking mass of dark pitchy stuff. He rolled the barbed ends of the darts into the mixture, turning them slowly so that they would be evenly covered. On a log beside him were scores of darts, freshly poisoned.

Although I was unable to discover the names of the trees from which this poison was made (most Dyaks make their poison from the sap of the *ipoh* tree), its effectiveness was proved to me when I saw an argus pheasant shot from the top of a tall tree with a poisoned dart. A young Poonýaboong had taken Naiowan and me to a

paddy-field where he said we could kill a deer, and we were sitting on a hillock waiting for sunset, when the Poonýaboong picked up his blowpipe and crept away from us. I was wondering what on earth he was up to, when suddenly he stopped, raised the blowpipe toward a tall tree and filled his lungs. About two seconds later a large bird crashed down to the earth; and I ran over to see a gorgeous argus pheasant, stone dead.

As yet, I had seen no heads beyond one ancient skull hung from a rafter in a small hut. But I knew that, since their fame as head-hunters had spread all over Borneo, there must be scores of heads somewhere in the village. There were poles standing along the river bank on which to display heads, and the ivory handles of their knives were covered with tufts of human hair. The long room of the chief was the only place I had not been allowed to enter. I was sure that a marvelous collection of human skulls hung from the rafters of that room.

My fourth day in the village came around, and I was sitting in the entrance of my hut wondering how I could possibly see the fruit of a Poonýaboong head-hunting raid, when my attention was attracted by a commotion at the far end of the compound. A group of men was standing and squatting beside one of the huts, and other men, followed by women carrying baskets and knives, were coming down the notched logs of the other huts. This was more excitement than I had seen in the village for the past three days, so I went up to investigate, followed by some of the coolies and the tall Dyak.

There were three strange Poonýaboongs in the group, and on the ground, surrounded by the women, was a huge python, bound to a pole. Its head was missing, and it had been cut through in several places, yet the thick body

writhed and contracted, swelling powerfully beneath the tight rotan bindings. At one side, piled in a heap, were three baskets, red with blood. I started over to inspect them when the tall Dyak touched my arm and motioned me back. The three strangers were talking rapidly with the other Poonýaboongs, glancing at me, gesticulating and making hoarse noises in their throats. For some reason, they seemed angry. I walked around them to have another look at the bloody baskets, but they picked them up and started toward the chief's hut. Inside of each basket were several bulky objects wrapped in banana leaves.

I could not follow them, and as I turned to watch the women cutting up and eating pieces of the python, the tall Dyak whispered in my ear: *"Prahou ketchil Poonýaboong-punya prahou!"*

He had recognized the three strange Poonýaboongs as the same men from whom we had stolen the *prahou* on the little river! More than that, they had come back with heads, and a dozen visions of what might happen to us began to flash across my mind.

I wondered why the Poonýaboongs in the village had not noticed the dugout before and made trouble about it. The thought eased my mind considerably, for they undoubtedly had noticed it. Yet the only thing to do was to see the chief immediately and make amends before the three strangers started trouble.

After some time the chief came down from his hut, puffing a banana leaf cigarette of the tobacco I had given him. Yes, he told me through the tall Dyak, he had known it was their *prahou*. He said nothing more, and I, judging that it was best to act rather than talk further, went back to my hut and returned with a huge bundle of

tobacco which I told him to present to the three strangers. He took it solemnly and went back into his hut.

It gave me a wonderful sense of relief, and my thoughts immediately turned to the heads in the baskets. How many of them were there? Where were they from? How could they possibly have taken heads and returned to the village since the tall Dyak had first seen them? The nearest village was many days by *prahou* down the river; there were no villages, to my knowledge, anywhere else. Where had they gone for heads that they could return on foot so quickly?

The answer came that evening. By some miracle, my whole party was invited into the long room. I could not account for it. I felt suspicious and wondered in a humorous way if they intended to settle the matter of the stolen *prahou*. Certainly it was to be no ordinary visit, and it might be a chance to see the heads. Naiowan was willing, the soldiers were willing, and only the Malay coolies demurred. That evening, the soldiers, the Dyaks and myself went into the long room.

The room was crowded with wild men. There were three times as many as I had ever imagined belonged to the village. Parties of them must have been coming in all afternoon, for they squatted, four deep, in a half-circle that extended from one end of the room to the other. The chief sat in the center smoking silently. All eyes were staring at the floor. The absolute silence, the sense of waiting for something, unnerved me. No one seemed to notice me; each Poonýaboong seemed absorbed in himself. On an impulse, I glanced up, to see a row of freshly taken heads hanging from the rafters directly above me.

Still no one spoke. I waited for a wild-eyed Poonýa-

boong to stand up and tell how he had taken them; I expected an orgy of barbarism; but every man sat quietly, staring at the floor. My own Dyaks were staring at the floor; the Javanese soldiers were looking at the floor with shifting, slightly nervous glances. I counted the heads hanging from the rafters. There were nine of them. They had been cut off under the upper jaw, and I could see upper rows of white teeth glistening here and there in the torchlight like little curved strings of pearls.

I sat beneath them, glancing restlessly at the dusky shapes around me for what seemed to be an hour, practically bursting with curiosity, hoping and expecting that any minute something unheard of would occur. Then a thought, vague at first, took shape within my brain. Remembering the words of Captain Van Holden I peered closely at my Dyak coolies, and at the half-circle of head-hunters. I knew that I had solved the mystery of the silence; the Poonýaboongs believed that each of the heads above them was giving out the strength of a man, and they were gathered together in the long room to absorb that strength. As a sign of friendliness, the greatest honor and compliment he could bestow, the chief had asked me and my men to sit within his long room and become stronger. I, squatting within the long room of the Poonýaboong chief, absorbing the departing strength of nine heads! I, a white man, sharing the strange superstition which prompted the taking of those nine heads! It was almost unbelievable! It was the weirdest experience that I have ever undergone, and I sat quietly, tingling with excitement until long after midnight, when the chief arose, and we trooped silently out of the hut.

Where the heads came from, I could never discover. Naiowan said they might have been the heads of Iban

Dyaks who had come across the mountains to gather pitch. The three strangers might have run across them while hunting, and shot them with their blowpipes. But however they had come by them it must have been a brilliant massacre; a massacre prompted by the desire for strength, without which they could not be the Poonýa-boongs, feared by all the tribes of Borneo.

After that night I threw down the last barrier of reserve, for I felt that I had been accepted. The women and girls, once so frightened at my approach, now came up and took tobacco from my hand. Twice I attended witch-healings, and saw the young men cutting their arms in the belief that the strength of the departing blood would enter the body of the sick person and drive out the devil. I watched them dance until they fell exhausted to the floor, and knew that they believed the wasted energy would help the sick person. The chief repeatedly brought me presents of eggs and chickens, and once offered to keep me in rice for an entire year if I would take one of his daughters and live in his village.

But I was beginning to love Borneo; the jungle was getting a grip on me. I felt it in my bones. I felt keenly whenever I watched the beautiful sword-dance and heard the music of the gourd instrument. I was getting too close to the jungle; and I felt that if I got any closer I might never leave. It was time to go, it was time to move on.

The evening before I left the village I was sitting quietly on the bank, watching an old man making fishing cord from shredded wood, when the sound of a gamelan boomed from the village across the river. In deep methodical beats the drumming leaped from the distant huts, held with a numbing vibrancy in the air, and became

the undertone of a second time-worn booming. In it there was the feeling of centuries of seasoned wood, the lumbrous, revolving cycle of jungle life, the damp odors of rotting vegetations, and all the savage imagery of death. If the coppery clouds of a thunder-storm were touched with a mallet, they would give forth just such a sound. Faster they came, to a barbaric measure; almost a tune. Then slowly and more slowly, with a tireless deliberation, until the jungle was flooded with the sound, and exuded it reluctantly, stealthily, long after the drumming had ceased.

Almost immediately from the huts behind me, women and girls, dressed in their finest clothes and wearing gold bracelets and earrings, descended, and in twos and threes walked slowly to the trails at the edge of the clearing. They were awaiting the nightly return of their men from the paddy-fields.

For perhaps a half-hour I sat, my ears eager for the dull chunking of paddles, the patting of feet upon the wet clay. My eye caught a lean dog slipping past the supports of a hut with a noiseless wolf trot. To the left three women, leaning forward under the weight of children which they bore upon their backs, were beginning to ascend the notched log of a hut; a man with a heavy pack upon his shoulders and carrying a spear lancewise followed in the company of several trotting dogs. From the openings of the jungle trails four more dusky figures stooped forward, paced by dogs, followed by dogs. They passed unconcerned, and still others came into the clearing. From the left, from the right; from up the river bank, from every opening in the clearing they slipped, unnoticed, like evening flights of wild geese.

Smoke began to drift out from the sides of the houses,

and with the sudden darkness, flames leaping high within, silhouetted figures that moved slowly about, half stooping, half crawling, like beasts in a cage. Except for the occasional yelp of a dog, the village was still, and I wandered back to my bivouac to prepare for the return to civilization. I had seen for the last time the homecoming of the Poonýaboongs.

Chapter Twenty-Two

VARIETY

I REACHED Bandjermasin in thirty-five days, so much bewildered by the sudden impact of civilization that I could scarcely control my emotions. My little room in the hotel cantonment was screened against red ants and mosquitoes, there were chairs upon which to sit, and inside was a bed covered with clean white sheets. I laughed a little bit, ran my hands over them and adjusted the pillow carefully. Then I took off my ragged clothes and lay down.

A servant came in to ask if I wanted anything. I want anything? I wanted something desperately, but my mind was in a chaos of readjustment, and I could not determine what it was. In rapid Malay I told him that he might bring me a glass of water. Cold water? Well, yes, any kind of water; yes, cold water if he had it. Suddenly a phonograph began to play a lively dance air. I hung on its every note, striving desperately to recall memories that would connect the past with the present. I began to choke up with sentiment; my pillow became soaked with tears. Hours later, when the dinner gong rang I arose refreshed, determined to shake off the jungle.

Food. Quantities of food. Pickles, heaps of steaming potatoes, fish, iced tea and desserts. I thought I had never seen so much food. And there were finger-bowls in which was good drinking water. I ate slowly and very carefully. I regretted that I could eat no more, and I wondered if the food that I had not touched would be

wasted, if it would be thrown out upon the ground.

Some white people were eating in the dining-room with me. They had bottles of beer upon their table and were talking and laughing together. I wondered why they did not look at me, why they did not seem interested in knowing what I had been through. They were like wax figures worked by strings. They laughed, drank beer and were absorbed in themselves. They were at the edge of the jungle, yet they did not seem to know it. They seemed like dilettantes, dancing along the edge of destruction.

After supper I sat near the tables where they were gathered, hoping that some one would speak to me. I felt that I had something to tell the world, something about themselves that they had never realized, and would be interested, perhaps frightened, to know. I looked at them hungrily for a long time before I realized that they were speaking Dutch, and would not understand me. Then I went back to my room and sat in a chair on my veranda, staring at the stars. I had lost something of myself to the jungle, and I wondered if I could ever belong to the world again.

I needed money to go on. Captain Van Holden had lent me money to pay the coolies, and a fine young lieutenant had lent me enough to see me back to Bandjermasin. With the little that remained I cabled to my father for money, and two days later, with my debts paid up, I sailed for Bombay.

The trip passed strangely, for I could not quite feel that the people to whom I talked were of flesh and blood. The captain, a splendid type of Englishman, came aft to dine with me, and with the reserve of Anglo-Saxons we swapped experiences, discussed the Orient and wished the other would unbend a little and reveal himself.

When the captain got up from the table, I reached for his hand expecting to meet with thin air. To feel his hand shake mine only intensified the illusion. There was a wealthy Bengali rice merchant traveling with me. We often talked, yet when he turned away, flashing his white teeth in a pleasant smile, I expected never to seen him again. I could not quite realize that the jungles of Borneo and the peak of civilization could exist so close together. It seemed as if my feet were still rooted to the crawling vegetation, and a dream had enveloped my head.

But the realities of good food and the clanking of the ship's engines dispersed the clouds, and complete normality came when we slipped into the Bombay locks beside a familiar red bulk, grimy and weather-beaten. It looked like a huge packing box; and strolling down the deck was a chunky man with a white sailor cap perched on top of his head. It was the bo'sun, walking the main deck of the *Hyacinth!* I wondered if he recognized me. He leaned over the rail, looking directly at me; then he spat into the water and waddled aft.

The *Hyacinth!* It seemed ridiculous to include my days in her dingy fo'castle with India, Flores and Borneo. The bo'sun would not believe me if I told him where I had been. He would laugh, snarl at me, and send me to painting the fore-peak once more. But the *Hyacinth* was still glorious, as glorious as the first time I had seen her being loaded in New York, for she had brought me to all the treasures that I was now gathering. She had been to New York and back again since I had left her in Calcutta.

To my relief, we docked far away from the *Hyacinth,* and I went ashore feeling that I had escaped a jail sentence.

I discovered that one must have money when he returns to civilization. The steamship passage from Bandjermasin, and countless little luxuries aboard had eaten up most of the money my father had cabled me; I had only a few rupees left. So I took a room at the Y. M. C. A., and began to wonder how I could make more money. I went to see the editor of the *Illustrated Weekly*, and to my great joy he asked me to do an article on Borneo. That night I not only wrote that article, but burned electricity until three A.M. doing two more about the Dutch East Indies. The next day he accepted all three, invited me to his home for dinner, and gave me a check which, if it had been in dollars instead of rupees, would have made me absolutely helpless. I wouldn't have known what to do with so much money.

I celebrated. Bombay, I felt, was my home town, and I began to plaster it with rupees. I bought new clothes so that I could sit in the best hotel foyers, watch the white people and drink Samos. I went to the shops I had visited before and bought loads of useless curios just to arouse flickers of recognition among the Hindus. Eight months ago I had ordered some visiting cards from a little native shop sunk far into the depths of the city. I went over to see if he still had them, and to my surprise he not only had kept them, but remembered me immediately. He insisted that Allah had sent me back, and celebrated my return by ordering vile lemon drinks, which I drank with gusto. Then, after distributing baksheesh to his three sons I ambled off with the blessings of Allah on my head and five hundred useless cards in my pocket.

Oh, I visited a number of old friends,—the leather man over by the Null Bazar, who always got laughing fits

when we talked; the furniture man in the Thieves' Bazar; and on Hornby Road I met a British beachcomber whom I had fed in Calcutta almost seven months before. So I celebrated Christmas, Thanksgiving and my birthday by feeding him again and ordering enough drinks to make us shipmates.

But a week of carousing and foolery began to pall. The faces that had at first seemed so friendly and so glad to find me on the streets with them began to look smug and without vision. Bombay, once so exuberant and tumbling with life, was really going on in a monotonous grinding way. It was nothing but a mechanical business force. I thought of Arabia, and the Persian Gulf; the great deserts toward which I was traveling where there were whiteness, sunlight and firm ground; where there were no leeches and red ants, no everlasting fourteen-hour silences between dawn and sunset. I wanted a change, and I knew that the deserts would give it to me in a powerful way.

Karachi was the logical jumping-off place. It was at the edge of the desert. The vast untamed mountains of Afghanistan lay to the north, Persia was a bit to the west, and across the Arabian Sea was the forbidden coast of Oman, Arabia, Iraq, Bagdad! But the most alluring of them all was the wild coast of Oman.

I thought of taking a dhow up to Karachi, and then going over to Oman, but the prospect of spending a month or so sitting in a boat before reaching Karachi appalled me. I wanted to reach Arabia as soon as possible, so I bought a steamboat passage and arrived at Karachi in three days.

To my surprise, the city was fascinating. This was not the Karachi that the *Hyacinth* had stopped at; here were

no beggars in supplication before the almighty dollar. Old Town, hidden away from the creaking of tram-cars, held all the fabled mystery of Bagdad. Walled courts and interlacing passageways of gray stone intrigued the fancy; bazar after bazar of ancient crafts encircled the crowded market-places, and the buildings that covered the hilly site were separated from one another only by pathways of cunningly laid stone that networked the city like the ways of a catacomb.

But Karachi was cold. Winds from the snow-capped mountains to the north were sweeping down upon the city, and the heavily laden caravans swayed through the narrow streets draped with odorous cloths and tattered rugs. In the frigid bazar courts groups of bearded Baluchs sat surrounded by their camels; and at night, by the glimmer of tiny fires, they smoked cigarettes, drank endless quantities of tea and sang strange tales of their mountain homes.

I was intimidated by the cold weather, and as I walked through the labyrinths of stone buildings at night I wondered if I could ever endure the Arabian Sea in an open boat. My blood was thin from nine months of equatorial heat. Even with the heavy overcoat, wool socks and wool trousers I had bought in Bombay I shivered, went into convulsions of shivering. But the only way to see the coast of Oman was by dhow. No steamers went there, and at Dubai, the nearest port to the interior, no Europeans were allowed to land. As I had bought a shotgun in Calcutta to settle my decision to go tiger hunting, so I went into the bazars and bought an old Persian rug, to wrap around me when I was sailing the Arabian Sea.

To find a dhow, however, was harder than making the

All the fabled mystery of Bagdad.

decision to take one. The harbor was full of boats; their masts stuck up like bayonets above the water-front. But they were not sailing, for the *shimal* was on. Sandstorms, I was told, were sweeping down from the plains, and heavy cold winds were blowing out of the Persian Gulf. Only last year two hundred dhows full of pilgrims bound for Mecca had been lost in a *shimal*. The open dhows could not last in such weather, and were waiting until the weather cleared.

What could I do? I had not enough money to hire a dhow; I would have to wait until I could find one bound for Arabia with a cargo. I decided to drift around Karachi, waiting. It was a fascinating city to drift in, and there was always the chance that something might turn up.

I employed my time sitting in the bazars, trying to improve my smattering of Hindustani. In the silversmith's bazar was an old Hindu who spoke English. I would sit beside him in his tiny shop by the hour, watching his thin hand carve marvelous designs on a silver casket. He was always glad to see me, and never wearied of answering my questions as he worked. In the slipper bazar was an enormous Mohammedan with a delightful sense of humor. As he wove gold and silver threads over the toe of a slipper, he made witty remarks in English about the passing throng; other remarks he addressed with a sly grin at his helpers who sat in the rear of the shop. How they would flash their white teeth in laughter! But the next moment he would become serious, and guide me in the construction of a Hindustani phrase. My feet were much too large for any slippers he had, but he made me a beautiful pair and impressed me with the fact that they were of whole pieces of leather—not of odds and

ends like the other ones, which fall apart within two weeks. But business was business; they cost me three rupees.

Always, when I asked about the sailing of dhows to Arabia, the natives stopped their work and stared at me. Why didn't I take the steamer? Only coolies good for nothing but *shimals* traveled in dhows. And why did I want to go to Oman anyway? It was barren and unproductive; the people were hostile tribesmen. Karachi was a much better place! Here one could get potatoes for two annas! *Chepatis* and fish curry for a pice! And the girls of Karachi, too, were not to be despised. Ha, American, there were no such girls in Arabia!

I think that, what with merchants handing me dates and sweetmeats at every turn, and an open sesame to the homes of a half-dozen Hindus and Moslems whom I had met while wandering around, I could have spent a very delightful year in Karachi. But my persistent efforts to find a dhow, even though many of these efforts were but a means of becoming acquainted with people, bore fruit rapidly. I was idling through a particularly crooked alley one night when I came upon a Hindu wedding. It was one of those delightful Oriental festivities at which every one is welcome—Moslem, Christian and Buddhist alike. They sat me on a Persian rug, put flowers in my hand, and brought me plates of candied fruits, *chepatis* and honey, and rich assortments of Indian delicacies, dripping with sweetness. The bride and groom were introduced to me; she, a shy little thing with great brown eyes and lashes that held the tears to her cheeks, and he, a gentlemanly youth who shook hands awkwardly, like all natives who are not acquainted with our formal custom of greeting.

As the musicians played and the girls danced, I dis-

covered that the man who sat next to me was a clerk in the employ of a native combine that operated a fleet of dhows between Karachi and the Gulf ports. Having been educated under a European instructor he was not astonished at the ways of white men, for, when I told him of my plan, he was eager—nay, enthusiastic—to help me. As soon as the weather permitted, he said, his employers intended to dispatch a dhow load of potatoes and rice to Sohar, Arabia. If more cargo were found there, the dhow would proceed on up the Gulf; but if it returned, he thought I could find other boats as all the trade between the small Arabian ports was carried on by dhow.

I was elated with my discovery, and for the next two days did nothing but walk up and down the water-front near the warehouse, wrapped in all the clothes I possessed. The next morning a servant came to my room with a note, which asked me to make ready as the weather had cleared and the dhow might leave at any moment that day. I left my nice clothes in a suitcase with the steamship agency to be sent to Basra, stuffed a few belongings into my sea bag and went down to the warehouse.

The dhow was made fast to the quay, loaded to the gunwales with sacks of potatoes and rice. Three Moslem Indians were working over an old sail, and seated high upon the poop, watching them, was the little clerk who had sent me the note.

"Well, you've come!" he cried. "I thought you might have changed your mind."

"It is cold," I replied, dropping my sea bag beside him. "Are they all ready to go?"

He shrugged. "Ready, yes; but look!"

The sky to the northwest was clouding over again. The wind, I had already noticed, was picking up, becoming a bit sharper.

"What are you going to eat?" he asked suddenly. "You can't eat fish and rice like these coolies!"

I laughed. Fish and rice! Ye gods, I had been living on that diet for six months, and here it was again. Well, I only ate when I was hungry, so what did it matter? "I'll get some biscuits and chocolate," I replied, "and I've yet to get beriberi from eating too much rice."

The wind grew stronger, but the sailors worked on.

"Now, don't go inland at Sohar!" the clerk warned me. "It's a bad country, and the Arabs are sometimes very ugly. The only reason we send our produce over there is that they pay high prices. If I were you I should go right on up the Gulf to some place like Bahrein. There, you will have no difficulties, and you can see the pearl fisheries. They are the biggest pearl fisheries in the world."

"And whom do I pay for my passage?" I asked.

"Passage?" he screamed. "In this?" nodding to the dhow beneath him. "You pay us nothing. But give some baksheesh to the coolies if you wish. They need it, poor devils. Just pay them for their food, and give a little baksheesh, and they will be satisfied."

I waited impatiently. Noon came, and the coolies began to prepare their rice. Afternoon drifted on, cold and damp. I went back to my room. The next day I came down and repeated the vigil; but on the morning of the third day, with the heat of the sun fighting a bitterly cold wind for supremacy, we set sail. Huddled up in my Persian rug, I sat upon the sacks of potatoes, and watched the harbor expand into the limitless waste of green ocean. For hours I sat there, watching headlands and peninsulas disappear; and when I finally looked back, Karachi had disappeared below the horizon.

Chapter Twenty-Three

ADVENTURE

The sun was hot, the sea was calm, and not even the coldest winds could entirely destroy the heat that it reflected. To our right were the ocher-colored mountains of Baluchistan, almost invisible against the clear sky, like the shadows of an even greater range behind them. Although my memory of charts told me that we could have saved time by cutting directly across the Arabian Sea to Sohar, the helmsman laid his course within sight of those pale mountains, to be prepared to run in, I thought, in case a *shimal* blew up.

Thus we were following an ancient route, the same that the ships of Nearchus had taken after the conquest of India; the same over which countless thousands of richly laden vessels had traveled to Bagdad in the days of the Caliphs. The ships of Cyrus and Pahlavi had skirted these mountains; perhaps Sinbad, himself, had taken refuge beneath the calm of their barren peaks. I followed in the shadows of the great, yet only the encompassing majesty of sea and mountains gave cause for exultation. A school of marvelous spouting whales frolicked to the south, their course always betrayed by the glistening flocks of sea-birds that followed them. We passed over ocean that was as red as blood; ocean made red by swarms of almost imperceptible protozoan forms, like peridinium, that floated in clouds beneath the surface. We came upon great yellow turtles swimming with their heads above water. Once, a huge fellow, covered with barnacles and

seaweed, swam directly toward us. Three yards from the bow he began to sink; and from the high after-deck I could see him sinking through the clear green water until he was no larger than a twenty-dollar gold piece.

On the fourth day from Karachi the wind calmed down to such an extent that we scarcely moved. We must have been over a reef, for the bottom of the sea was spotted with huge white and black patches that looked to be sand and gigantic marine growths. Schools of bright fishes swam beneath us, and occasionally a large fish, like a grouper, would zigzag among them like a grumpy old man looking for something.

The Indians, to occupy the time, dropped over lines and began to fish, and in a half-hour's time there were fifteen good mackerel trailing in the water behind us on a rope. I was sitting on the after-deck, half asleep, hoping for a breeze, when a swirl in the water aroused me, and I turned around just in time to see an enormous shark take half the string of fish and turn to go down. I pulled the rope in rapidly, but he made another vicious lunge for them. He struck his head soundly against the side of the dhow and began to swim around us. He was all of eighteen feet long, and his head was so close that I could have touched it with my foot.

One of the natives prodded him with a pole. In a flash he had seized it in his teeth and bitten it in half. The Indian jabbed him with a thicker pole; the shark threw the full weight of his body against the dhow, stood off for a moment, and then disappeared as if infuriated with us. An instant later we began to rock from side to side; he had gripped the keel of the boat in his jaws and was shaking us! The dhow was massively built and heavily loaded yet we moved with his every tug.

All afternoon he swam around us with a sinister gleam in his eye. He had left several of his teeth embedded in the heavy pole, and I imagine that there must have been a score of them in the keel. I wondered what would have happened had we been in a rowboat.

There were eleven days of such idling, some of them so hot that only the shelter of the after-deck prevented sunstroke; others so cold that I had to pile the sacks of rice around me and wrap up in my Persian rug to keep warm. I longed for a breeze, for a *shimal,* for anything that would hurry us on to the coast of Oman. My wish was more than gratified; for the next morning, as we were half-way across the Gulf of Oman, the wind came up.

I could see by the Indians' expressions that they were worried. Instead of taking in sail they let more out, as if the risk of losing our canvas was less than some other danger which I could not yet determine. The dhow, close-hauled, surged ahead like a yacht. Often our lee gunwale took water; a dozen times I thought we would capsize for good. I wondered what object the Indians had in trying to race in such a sea.

Toward afternoon the wind increased to such great strength that it was absolutely necessary to take in sail. The blows came in heavy gusts from the northwest, drenching us with the tops of waves. With the intense darkening of the skies a great wall of blackness appeared at our right, particles of sand began to sting my eyes, and I realized, in a flash, the purpose of the race for Sohar. A sand-storm was coming up; the dreaded *shimal* of the Persian Gulf was sweeping down upon us.

We were helpless before it. The veil of sand came on, the words of the merchant in Karachi: ". . . only coolies,

good for nothing but *shimals,"* ran over and over again in my mind. Our only salvation, I thought, lay in reaching Sohar before we were suffocated by sand. For all I knew, it might be two hundred miles away.

We were enveloped in darkness. The sand pressed against our shred of sail with the force of an avalanche; it ripped and stung our faces like shot. I could scarcely see the waves any longer. I could not see the bow of the boat, and the wind was laden with dust so fine that every breath was like drawing cotton into my lungs. The waves were forgotten in the sand-storm, and it was only when I noticed the Indians throwing the sacks of potatoes overboard that I realized the greatest danger that confronted us—that of being sunk by the weight of the sand. We covered our heads with cloths, shirts, trousers, anything that would keep out the sand, and with the dhow half emptied and the waves bursting over us, made a desperate effort to reach the coast of Oman before the *shimal* obliterated us.

I huddled under the after-deck for an eternity, my eyes closed and my brain whirling. There was nothing I could do; nothing any of us could do. The dhow was filling with sand and taking water heavily. Throwing off our coverings we threw out the remainder of the cargo and were flung from gunwale to gunwale, knocked down, saved from being washed overboard by miracles. One of the natives, with a bucket, tried to bail out the sand and water; another, crawling forward into the blackness like a man on a tight rope, took a knife from his teeth to cut away the sail. It ripped away, flung itself into the water above us. With a puny cracking, mast and sail swept down the length of the dhow and were lost in our wake.

Hours later, when I had given up all hope of ever reaching land alive, we struck bottom. We were almost on a level with the water. Combers struck the side and leaped high into the darkness, crushing us to the timbers in their downfall. I was practically lifeless from the quantity of sand and water I had taken, and held to the thwarts only by locking my legs and arms around them. I thought that we had struck a reef, and would be lashed into complete destruction.

Suddenly, one of the natives released his hold upon the gunwale, dropped over the side and began to walk. Another followed him, and the third pulled at my arm, urging me to come. I knew, then, that we had reached a beach, and with this chance of life before me, I plunged in.

How I ever managed to reach the shore I can not explain. I remember being pounded into the sand, crushed into the sand as if beneath an avalanche. I remember great forces pushing at my head and shoulders; others pulling at my feet, and a powerful undertow grinding me upon the sand. But I reached the shore. All of us reached the shore alive. We crawled behind rocks back from the beach, and then I knew no more.

I awakened the next morning as if startled from a nightmare. It seemed incredible that I had lived through a *shimal.* It awed me to realize that I had actually plumbed the depths of an experience which few men have ever lived to wonder about. I struggled out of the bed of sand that practically entombed me. The ocean, I could see, was calm, but my eyes pained when I tried to open them wider. I felt them, felt my face. It was swollen and sore to the touch. My whole body ached as if I had been stung by hornets.

The Indians had already awakened and were standing in the shoal water beside the dhow. She was almost on the beach, buried up to her rudder post in sand. Even if we had attempted to empty her it would have been impossible for the four of us to move her, for she was too deeply grounded, and we had no blocks or tackle with which to pull her off.

Where we were, I could only guess. From the ruggedness of the country and the absolute barrenness of the shore-line, I judged that we were on the northeastern coast of Arabia. The wind, blowing out of the Persian Gulf, might easily have carried us that far; might easily have blown us to the northeastern tip of Arabia. The Indians began to talk among themselves, and as I watched them, speculating upon what to do, they started up the coast, motioning me to follow them.

"Where are you going?" I asked in Hindustani.

"Sohar!" they replied.

Sohar! We were, I discovered, within *thirty miles* of Sohar! The helmsman, in spite of the *shimal* had landed us on the wild coast of Oman!

Chapter Twenty-Four

A Bargain in Oman

With a skin of water and a bundle of dates salvaged from the dhow, we started for Sohar. A ridge of black rocks, rising up almost from the water's edge, prevented any view of the hinterland. We walked on the narrow strip of sand between this ridge and the sea, yet often we were forced to cross ledges of rock that extended far out into the water. Sometimes we could not cross over these ledges, and were obliged to circle inland, working our way painfully over the steep crags. The Indians possessed amazing vitality; their feet were tough, and neither the extreme heat of day nor the cold of night appeared to affect them. I, having lost my shoes and practically all of my clothing in the *shimal,* was no match for their endurance.

As we walked along this hostile-looking coast, I recalled the warning of the little Indian clerk who had found me the dhow. He seemed to think that the Arab tribesmen of Oman were unfriendly and not to be trusted. The fat Mohammedan who had made my slippers had said that they were the most vicious tribesmen of Arabia. Although the Indians, whenever we were forced to climb into the abrupt cliffs to reach the wet sand once more, kept looking inland as if to be on guard and ready to hide, it seemed ridiculous to expect any hostile forces beyond the knife-edged rocks, the hot sun and the cold nights. Compared with the jungle, it was play; and the imminence of danger revealed by the Indians gave a zest to our journey that was like wine to my tired body.

But the next morning as we were crossing a sand spit, I saw a group of Arabs riding toward us from a shelf of rock that flanked a pass in the black hills; and I knew immediately by the Indians' expressions that this was the danger they had been on guard against. For a quarter of a mile on either side of them were sand-dunes that offered no place of concealment; yet why we had not seen them before I do not know. Now, there was nothing to do. We stood still and waited for them to ride up.

I was not at all impressed. Instead of sweeping down upon us as I had imagined Arabs would do, all twelve of them approached casually, arranging themselves before us in a half-circle. Eight of them were mounted on camels and three on horses, but the foremost, and he who later proved to be the sheik, rode a beautiful milk-white camel caparisoned with rich trappings. All of the Arabs were armed with modern rifles, and the sheik, in addition to his rifle, carried an automatic pistol in his waistband. As they talked, their faces expressed more amusement than cruelty. I half suspected that, instead of taking us captive, they were going to give us a handful of dates and ride on.

But a sudden glimmer in the sheik's eyes changed my thoughts immediately. Cutting short the reply of the Indian who was speaking in Arabic to the sheik, I made him understand, after a hard struggle in Hindustani, that he should tell the sheik that I was on government duty from Muscat, and that he and the other two Indians were my servants. Also, that I wished to be taken to Sohar immediately.

As this information was translated, the Arabs laughed and slapped the pommels of their saddles. The sheik

grinned; all of them grinned at me from beneath their checkered head-cloths. He asked if I were "Inglesi," and I, thinking that British prestige was powerful in Arabia, replied that I was English. They looked very blackly at me, and the sheik said something that the Indian did not translate, reined up his camel and motioned for us to follow them.

They led us back through the pass, and from there on seemed to take a vicious delight in taking us over the rockiest country they could find. I leaped from stone to stone, seeking out the flat and rounded spots in order to avoid breaking my feet. They made no effort to stay the fast walking of their camels, and did not once glance back, even though we were, at times, at least a hundred yards behind them. They took it for granted that we were following. And we did. Escape would have been futile to attempt. I felt that, at any suggestion of such an effort on our part, they might shoot us down like rabbits.

Yet, in spite of the possible danger that threatened me at their hands, I could not feel sorry that I had been captured, for it was an experience such as in my most romancing moments I had hoped might happen to me. I had escaped from a *shimal,* the gravest danger of the Eastern seas, only to fall into the hands of the tribesmen of Oman. I was being taken, as their captive, into the heart of wildest Arabia. It sounded like a chapter from an ancient book, and I wondered how long I would be with them; if they would initiate me into their tribe; if, a year from now, I would be wearing a checkered cloth with a gold head-rope and riding with this band of outlaws.

With visions of a future life among the Arabs in

mind, I half expected that we would be taken to some secluded empire in a great valley; but at noon we arrived at an encampment of black tents near an oasis surrounded by low hills. The villagers, coming from all sides to stare at me, were as uncouth a congregation of desert people as I had ever seen. The boys hooted at the Indians, kicked at them, threw stones. At length, after some words between the sheik and several old men, they were flicked with whips and driven into a small tent. I never saw them after that moment, and as the Indian who spoke Arabic was never brought forward as an interpreter I suspect that they were sold into slavery to some other tribe.

When any one of the crowd grinned at me, I grinned in return, eager to gain their friendship. I was frightfully thirsty, and made so many motions of drinking that an old woman pushed toward me with a skin of water and some dates. A moment later I was led into the sheik's tent and left in the company of three women, whom I took to be his wives.

After two days I was still without the slightest suggestion of what the sheik intended to do with me. When he slouched into the tent, winding his nickel Swiss watch, I looked at him for a hint of friendliness; but always he cocked his head to one side, staring at the floor with his one good eye like an absent-minded professor. He did not appear to take the slightest interest in my presence. Except for the constant watchfulness of the women, and the delightful attentions of a beautful young girl, I might have been his unwelcome guest.

But this lovely creature fully compensated for the monotony of being confined within the four walls of a black tent. Her eyes were like those of a wild fawn,

and from the fulness of her body, which was amply revealed by garments of filmy striped cloth, I judged her to be at least sixteen years of age. For the first two days she sat in a corner of the tent, spinning wool. I knew that she was watching me, but if I so much as turned my head she would cover her face.

The women appeared to have no objection to further advances, and gradually, as we were left more and more together, her shyness wore off. Once, when I was eating my meal of gristle and picked bones, she passed by and dropped a handful of rice into the gravy. The same day she brought me a *chepati* and some dates; and that night, as I lay down upon an old sheepskin to sleep, she smiled and handed me one of her own blankets. I lay down once more, and tried to sleep through the cold night. Sometime later I was awakened by a grateful feeling of warmth; she was huddled beside me, and had drawn all of her own blankets over the two of us.

For me the ensuing days were rich with the savage beauty of the desert. As she spun her wool I squatted an arm's length away, looking at her, fascinated by the rich blend of tans and reds in her cheeks and the lithe grace of her young body. We spoke with our eyes, and her own little gestures and actions were far more expressive than any words could have been; more eloquent, even, than her eyes, for although I gazed into them by the hour, they told me nothing that I could not completely understand. Whereas the eyes of the Florese islanders had been a soft brown, hers were as black as onyx set in mother of pearl. To gaze into them was to stare into the blackness of the night; yet I felt that they could scatter its lightning as well, if her passions were aroused. To touch her red lips when she

looked at one thus, was to sacrifice one's body and soul to a dumb goddess.

One night, as we sat in the entrance to the tent watching the flickering fires and the dusky forms that moved about them, there came the sound of pipes and drums. A mandolin dipped into the melody, lifted it into the air and danced ahead. Her hand gripped my arm like a claw. With a few hasty words to the guard she jerked me to my feet, almost dragged me toward the music.

In a half-circle, just outside one of the tents, a young Arab played the pipes. A woman, squatted beside him, produced the bewildering syncopation of drums from a huge tambourine which she beat with double motions of her hands and fingers. In the foreground of a dusky congregation of Arabs was the mandolin player, swaying slightly to the intoxicating ripple of his music.

So absorbed was I in the strange beauty of the scene that I almost forgot the girl. When I turned around she had flung off her outer garments, and was swaying gracefully to the melody. Her eyes were closed. Suddenly, giving me a swift glance, she leaped into the open space.

The music stung my ears like particles of glass, it flowed into my soul like honey and wrapped me in a dream of bubbling impetuosity that vibrated every muscle in my body, electrified every nerve I possessed. If the Flores Islanders were beautiful, or if their dances were enchanting, I must have been starved for beauty when I saw them; for this girl, flinging herself into the moonlight like a young doe, captured in a dozen movements all the subtle grace of the Orient.

Why she danced thus I do not know. I watched her hungrily, oblivious of the gurgling water-pipes around

me, unaware of the silent white-bearded forms wrapped in their *abbas*. A dozen times I half arose to leap into the dance with her, and as many times I repressed the impulse with tightened muscles. It was not to the music of Bagdad and Cairo that she danced, but to a weird lyric that only this beautiful creature of the desert could interpret. Her bare toes touched the earth like sunbeams, and the whiteness of her stomach in the moonlight was like the belly of a gazelle flashing across a cedared slope. The musicians, with their eyes following every motion of her body, played for her ear alone; yet I, with all the magnificence of the desert in my eyes, was the silent counterpart of a dance which was filling me with a deep love for all that was Arabian.

For twelve days I lived with this fierce, beautiful creature, expecting that at any moment I would be initiated into the tribe. The men went out into the desert regularly, and I longed to go with them. Sometimes they returned in the afternoon; often, late in the night, I was awakened by the scuffling of camels and the sound of many men bringing heavy burdens into their tents. I suspected that they had been on raids for one morning I noticed that one of the sheik's sons had a bandaged shoulder, and that his head-rope of gold braid was missing. Could I have ridden with the men on these excursions into the desert no thought of escape would have entered my head. Had I been accepted by the sheik as a fellow of the tribe my happiness would have been complete. But since twelve days had brought no suggestion of such a dénouement, I began to suspect that he was negotiating for a ransom. It would take months, I knew, for my release to be effected by that end; and the prospect of remaining inactive inside the black tent for

such a period was more than I could look forward to with pleasure. If the sheik thought that the beautiful girl was sufficient bondage to my spirits he was mistaken. I began to watch for an opportunity to escape.

At first, it seemed impossible. A man armed with a rifle and a knife was always sitting outside the tent, and usually there were several more men around the camp. A shot would bring a half-dozen or so from the camel herd, which was not far away. Then there were the women—big-breasted, full-bodied wenches, equally as powerful as the men—who were nearly always in the tent with me.

I realized, the next morning, that there was absolutely no way of slipping away unnoticed and decided to attempt my escape by a desperate means. The sheik had ridden off as usual leaving me guarded by a single Arab. This man, curiously enough, allowed me to roam about the camp, but grew furious and threatened to strike me when I approached the spot where the camels were feeding. His own mount, a splendid-muscled bay horse, stood close by my tent.

I lay down inside, considering the action I had decided upon. The women and girls were out, herding goats or gathering fire-wood. My guard was making tea in a little aluminum kettle. At the back of the tent were a number of heavy tent pins. I took a last precautionary glance outside, selected the heaviest of the pins, and crept out of the back of the tent.

He was still bending over his tea. With my heart pounding furiously, expecting that at any moment he would turn, that his intuition would warn him, I reached him in a leap, and struck him upon the head with all my might. It took more nerve to waste time in stripping off

his bandolier of cartridges than it took to strike the blow. But I could not bear to strike him again, and snatching his rifle from the ground I leaped upon his horse and started at full gallop for the coast.

Never in my life have I done anything more utterly reckless. Had the Arabs returned they could have shot me down in a moment. Had the man cried out, Arabs from the camel herd would have been after me. A woman, gathering wood along the stream bed, cried out as I raced by. Three more appeared in a hasty blur, and began running toward the encampment. Standing on a little hillock, not a hundred yards ahead, was the girl who had so completely devoted herself to me. I waved my hand, but she did not reply. In another moment the last vestige of the encampment was behind me and I was free.

I was sure that, provided the coast was clean fairway to Sohar, and that I was not cut off ahead, I could, with my start, easily outdistance a pursuit party and reach the city safely. Thus I headed a bit more to the north, so that I could reach the coast nearer Sohar and save making an unnecessary acute angle.

Keeping to the rocks as much as possible to hide my tracks, I ran into more rugged country than I had hoped for. I dreaded the time lost when I was forced to circle a rocky ridge, always expecting to see a cloud of dust behind me, and to hear the bullets whistling over my head. The rifle and bandolier of cartridges I clung to as a drowning man would clutch a straw, for I knew that, if they once sighted me, my accuracy with the rifle would be my only hope.

Toward mid-afternoon I began to smell the sea. I cut across a ridge and surmounted a cliff of glassy black

rock to see the Gulf of Oman spread before me; and, almost directly ahead, a bright red steamer of one smoke-stack plying leisurely toward the Persian Gulf.

I swelled with joy and kicked the flanks of my horse; but it was a good half-hour before I could reach the beach. I rode abeam of her in the shoal water firing the rifle, waving my ragged shirt and calling loudly, although it was much too far for my voice to carry. At length she put about and came in close. A boat was launched, and two hours later I was aboard the *S. S. Bendoe,* a little oil steamer bound up the Gulf from Muscat.

I had a bath, a clean bed and a wonderful dinner. Captain Harris and the mate produced warm underwear, a pair of shoes, a pair of blue pants and a heavy officer's jacket. And that night, as we sipped cool drinks and talked of my adventure with the *shimal* and the Arabs, a battered phonograph played *The Preacher and the Bear* and *Too Much Mustard* in a cracked, deliciously harsh way that I shall never forget.

But the next morning we sighted the coast of Persia. Before its beauty, my adventures of the day before slipped into the recesses of my mind. I had had enough of Oman for the moment and lay awake that night wondering whether to keep on for Bahrein and the pearl fisheries, or to explore the vast hinterland of southern Persia.

Chapter Twenty-Five

LAR!

The great mountains that rolled back from the Persian Gulf were pale and desolate, barren and washed out with the burning sun. They offered nothing but heat thirst, and beautiful slopes to rest upon. But by the time the *Bendoe* had anchored offshore at Bunder-Abbas I had decided to try to cross them. Navigation along the Arabian coast in an open dhow was too dangerous to tempt me further, and the possibility of again falling into the hands of the Arabs was no longer an enticing adventure. Beyond those mountains were the limitless wastes of Persia, ancient cities crumbling to dust, and bearded tribesmen with long hooked noses. There were caravans laden with silks and gorgeous rugs, and caravansaries into which no white man had ever stepped. Persia, with all its forgotten lore, was too appealing to miss, and I knew that within another month I would be far into the interior, sleeping under the stars beside a tiny fire.

On the distant beach were some dhows, a scattering of buildings and a flagpole. Beneath that pole, said Captain Harris, was the home of the British consul, one of the few white inhabitants of Bunder-Abbas. He could give me hints about the country, cable to Bagdad for my money, and help me in a number of ways if he were glad to see me. I went ashore with one of the dhows that had come for cargo, struggled through the breakers, and lay out in the sun until I was dry. Then I brushed my blue uniform clean and started across the sand-dunes to the

consul's house. I wanted to make a good first impression, for Britishers of the Orient are too often apt to judge a man by his personal appearance.

A charming Scotch woman met me at the veranda and turned me over to a servant who escorted me to the consul's office. He was most agreeable, cordial, in fact; and after I had explained my clothes and my mission we became old cronies. We drank highballs, smoked and swapped adventures for an hour or more; we had an excellent luncheon, and after the last of the wines had been rolled around the tongue we fell to a serious mapping out of my trip into the interior.

Just as he was in the midst of a warning about bandits and sand-storms, the view from the windows became cloudy. It turned gray, and in another moment everything outside was blotted out completely. The consul held up his finger and grinned. Very faintly came a soft hissing, that sounded much like snow falling on a crisp night.

The windows and doors were closed instantly, yet within a few moments his desk was covered with white dust. I could feel the fine sand in my nostrils as I breathed. It was impossible to see outside. The sea was gone, the mountains were gone; all about us was swirling sand. In that house we were trapped as completely as if we had been in a cabin on the Arctic Circle. I saw for the first time what had happened the night in the Gulf of Oman, and wondered by what miracle I had lived through it. It seemed incredible that any human being could exist in such a storm as was going on outside, yet it was nothing compared to a *shimal*.

The consul looked at me with a twinkle in his eyes and settled himself comfortably in his easy desk chair; but I

pointed to the map once more and asked what lay beyond that range of mountains.

"Only rocky plateaus," he smiled.

"And beyond them?"

"More hills and desert and rocks and clay."

"But aren't there any cities in the interior?"

Cities? He glanced at the ceiling, thought for a moment. "Why," he replied, looking at the map, "there's a city called Lar about two hundred miles in, and I don't know of any white man who has ever seen it. It used to be the starting-point of the old caravan route to India."

"Lar?" I repeated. It seemed that I had heard the name before, but I was unable to remember where. It was one of those rare names for which there is a special cavity in the mind. It was of the same fraternity as Stamboul, Timbuctoo, Cathay, Gaboon, Lhassa, Borneo. I could almost taste its strangeness, almost smell the ancient dead odors that it called forth. It suggested a forbidden city, a civilization forgotten to the centuries. I peered closely at the map and placed my finger on a spot far into the interior of southern Persia.

"I will go to Lar," I told the consul.

I wanted to go to Lar with a caravan. It was the way the trip should be taken, and I asked the consul about the possibilities of finding a caravan bound for there. But no, there were no caravans bound for Lar. Plenty of donkey and camel caravans were going to Kirman and Kashan, but no caravans went to Lar. Lar was decaying. In the days of Darius and Xerxes it had been powerful, and mighty caravans laden with riches had left the city on their way to India. But now, it was a crumbling ruin, sparsely populated.

I wired to Bagdad for my money that afternoon, and

went into the bazars of Bunder-Abbas to see about hiring donkeys. The main thoroughfare, after I had followed it between two rows of windowless buildings, dipped suddenly into what appeared to be the mouth of a cave. The sunlight was cut off by canopies of rags, sacking and boards; but streaks of light, filtered through the cracks, gave glimpses of the teeming life far ahead.

I started down this thoroughfare in search of the caravansary followed by a score of ragged Persians who walked over my toes to have another look at my face. The shops, still obscure to my eyes, seemed filled with gorgeous rugs. I could smell the rich odors of dates and ghee, and catch the glint of curious brown faces bending forward to look at me. Donkeys kept brushing past me, and now and then an excited Persian with a cudgel screamed and waved the throngs aside to make way for a long caravan of stealthy little donkeys which were almost concealed beneath the enormous burdens they carried. I paused to admire an unusually rich bit of rug hanging from a cobbler's shop, and a swarm of men and urchins closed in upon me. I proceeded down the aisle, and a lean Persian about seven feet tall strode past me like an ostrich with a pile of rugs over his shoulder. His head was as bald as an onion, his left arm gesticulated wildly, and through his upturned nose he sang the prices and quality of his merchandise in one sonorous yawp. Away he went, bobbing up and down through the glints of sunlight until he was lost in the darkness ahead.

At the main court of the bazar, directly on the beach, I came to the caravansary. It was thronged with caravans just come in from the desert, and milling around them were scores of medieval-looking natives with bobbed hair and blue smocks. They looked like pages of King

Arthur's court, and wore an apathetic expression that spoke of the bazars and the lowlands. Standing about the piles of hides and carpets were tall solitary men from the mountains, with long hooked noses and bushy brows. They carried rifles across their shoulders; the high lights on their cheek-bones were crimson, and when they moved, the blue-smoked figures gave way.

I eventually found a group of men who spoke Hindustani, and with ready phrases on my tongue explained that I wanted to hire donkeys. *Hire* donkeys? In some miraculous way, the news of my arrival and the purpose of my arrival had been passed to every merchant, coolie and hanger-on in the town. Every one knew that I wanted donkeys to get into the interior; they knew that, being a white man, I would not spend weeks in bargaining, that I would buy donkeys at any price just to keep moving. Moreover, they said, the trail to Lar swarmed with bandits, there was no water on the mountains, and between the mountains and the plain was a deep river which would be impassable at this season of the year. Thus, with such excuses, every man in the town who owned a donkey raised its price tenfold. Even the scrawniest animals could not be hired or purchased for less than a king's ransom; for a white man wanted donkeys, and white men had money.

The consul was helpless to aid me. The Persian minister shrugged his thin shoulders. But after three days of careful searching I discovered, with the aid of the consul's secretary and interpreter, a *charwadar* (donkey driver) who had just come in from Lingah, and who would take me to Lar for a fairly reasonable sum. But he had to have an assistant, and he had to take his son along. That made three extra donkeys. Two more for

me and my servant made five. I was beginning to despair of meeting the expense of the extras, and was about to sell the twenty-five pounds of dates and rice I had bought for food, when the consul offered me his milkman as a servant. This fellow, one Mohammed, had his own donkey, and would go for very little.

The *charwadar* was ready, the water-skins were filled, and all was set for an early morning start when word came from the Persian commandant that bandits had massacred a caravan on the Lar trail and that he could not allow me to leave without permission from Teheran. He was wiring immediately to ask if I could go, and if he should send a Sepoy escort with me.

Bandits again! Deserts seemed to be full of them! If you do not know the eloquent expletives of disappointment that the English language provides, you could have learned them then. The delicious basket of food that the consul's wife had prepared for me was unpacked. Mohammed delivered the milk again, and the *charwadar* turned his donkeys into the caravansary to feed. With fresh memories of the Arabs in my mind I was almost on the point of giving up the entire trip. I wanted peace and rest for a while. I had visioned a beautiful quiet trip through the mountains of Persia.

But it was impossible for me to back down. Lar was too strongly fixed in my mind, and I had hired my outfit and made all preparation. I had letters from the Persian minister of Bunder-Abbas to the government in Lar. I had a letter from the consul to a merchant in Lar. The next steamer out of Bunder-Abbas would not arrive for three weeks, and I could not impose upon the hospitality of the consul for that length of time.

Four days passed, but still the reply from Teheran did

not arrive. The commandant requested time. He offered me scented cigarettes and requested time. He pressed countless glasses of tea down my throat and asked for time. Time, dear sir! Time, if you please!

On the morning of the fifth day I could wait no longer; relations between the consul and me were becoming strained. Leaving word with the commandant to send an escort after me if he could, I gathered my little outfit together and started for Lar.

Chapter Twenty-Six

BECAUSE OF A NAME

We were far beyond the mountains, trudging through labyrinths of buttes and arroyos so gummy and slippery with wet clay that even the donkeys fell and had to be reloaded. Mahmoud ran behind me swathed in sodden clothes keeping the donkeys in line, beating them with his stick, shouting through his nose to urge them to greater speed. His little son trotted at my side wrapped in a tattered European coat that reached to his knees. His fingers and lips were blue with the cold, and his feet were bleeding, yet whenever our eyes met his face broke into a smile. Far ahead of us, leaping from stone to stone like a flamingo, was Mahmoud's assistant, a marvelous cooperation of brown limbs and white eyes. An end of white turban slapped dampishly against his neck with each stride; when he turned, a single tooth gleamed through the rain like a lighthouse upon a bold promontory. He was a fascinating creature, a misconception of proud mountain blood; and as we plodded on through the dawn his faint shadow leaped after him like the ghost of a forsaken ancestry.

Regularly, every three miles, we came upon the ruins of caravansaries built in the reign of Jamshid for the caravan trade to the Persian Gulf. If there was any water in the wells we slept beneath the ruins at night. If not, we kept on until we found one that held water. But it was never water such as I had seen in Borneo or Arabia. The bodies of birds and rats floated in it; some-

times the carcass of a donkey made a little island in the center. Always it was green and slimy, and after a rain it was heavy with mud.

But although the days were hard, the evenings and nights brought full compensation. With the dying rays of the sun, peaks that had been almost invisible against the sky changed to flowing pyramids of soft lavender. Walls of sandstone were transformed into red draperies that blended with the soft sheen of the desert; and when the massive pageant of color began to fade into darkness, the stars, scintillating through the cool night air, revealed themselves as notes of the great prelude that had been played by the sunset.

Lying thus in the moonlight that streamed through the crumbling gray dome, my blistered feet and tired body were forgotten. I tried to recall music that would be in harmony with the night; music that would express the relentless cruelty of the desert by day, its inexpressible grandeur at sunset, and its tenderness at night. I regretted that I could not carry the desert with me and give it to the world in song.

The first plateau dipped into a vast plain of mud which brought us to the banks of a river. Up-stream about a half-mile were the ruined piers of an ancient bridge; and a gray wall, extending an interminable distance into the plain from both sides of the river, showed that I was looking upon the immense viaduct over which the caravans of Jamshid had passed a thousand years ago. This was the "impassable river" spoken of by the merchants of Bunder-Abbas; but Mahmoud, without an instant's hesitation, waded in, leaning against the current on his staff. The water was icy cold, sparkling and slightly effervescent. I scooped up a handful to drink and found,

to my amazement, that it was salty, as salty as the Persian Gulf. Yet there were fish swimming in the water—little animals about three inches long! Here, a hundred miles from the coast, was a salt river that held fish!

But the merchants of Bunder-Abbas had spoken in metaphors, for the salt river, although it gave no suspicion of danger itself, was the precursor of a peril far more terrible than any it might have offered. It marked the end of fresh water; and as we left the high plateaus and began to wind through the lofty mountains with our water-skin half empty, the preciousness of water, so keen to every desert traveler, was pounded into my brain with every stride. The ruined caravansaries sprawled over the earth every three miles, to be sure; but the gray domes of their wells shaded nothing but cracked mud. Countless streams of sparkling water gushed down the ravines, but the water was salty and bitter. The valleys were strewn with fossilized coral and tortoise shells, and the mountains were gigantic masses of petrified oyster shell. I was walking over the bed of an ancient sea which offered nothing but gray dust and salt water. Our half-skin of fresh water was a pitiful supply for ourselves and the donkeys, yet we used it freely that night, hoping that on the morrow we would find a well somewhere in the mountains that held a pool of green liquid.

At noon of the next day our water-skin was empty. The winds were like heated breaths coughed in my face, and the sun, reflected by the white sand and stone, enveloped us in an aura of heat waves. Like Mohammed and the others, I covered my head with a cloth as I walked. When I rode, draped in a heavy rug that reached to my feet, I was forced to keep turning around from time to time in order to avoid being burned to the bone.

Mahmoud's big dried fish, tied securely to the pack on his donkey, stared at me through sunken eyes, imploring a drop of water.

Mahmoud, experienced desert traveler that he was, did not realize any more keenly than I the seriousness of our situation. In these high altitudes no rain had fallen, and the dust sparkled with alkali and salt. The last caravansary had been a pathetic heap of stones, almost indistinguishable from the ruggedness of the valley, and there seemed to be no hope for water until we had crossed the mountains. Although the donkeys had not drunk since the previous noon we urged them forward relentlessly; we ignored the mirages of lakes and beautiful oases that allured us from every side and started for the pass, our eyes haunting every dip in the valley ahead.

Never have I realized so keenly the preciousness of water. I chewed cooked mutton for moisture, but it made my mouth cottony and thick. With visions of the great Barito swinging down through the valley I sucked pebbles, but they heated my throat, dried it up completely. I tied a cloth over my mouth to keep out the alkali dust, but the sense of suffocation that it caused made me tear it off again. Flocks of quail whirred up from every dry watercourse, and the white tails of gazelles flashed to the left and right. In the blinding heat this life appeared and disappeared, like flakes of silver tossed into the sunlight.

By mid-afternoon I could feel my tongue growing larger within my mouth. It was like a piece of fat cactus, and when I opened my mouth to breathe the air made it burn. My head throbbed, my eyes were practically blinded. Water! Oh, for a drop of the water that soaked the jungles of Borneo! For a drop of the clear sparkling liquid that overflowed the trout streams

of the Catskills! Why could these gray hills not be the glaciers of Wyoming; why could they not offer even a tiny pool, a puddle of water?

Once I did find water, a deep crystal well of it in a bed of limestone. I called Mahmoud and bent down to drink, wondering why it was not green and slimy, why there were no rats and donkeys floating in it. It was like a vision, and as I touched my lips to the reflection of its placid surface Mahmoud grabbed my shoulder. *"Né, Sahib, né!"* he cried. He asked if I had drunk any, and then dropped a stone into the pool. It bubbled and sizzled like a swarm of bees. It was charged with alkali.

At sundown we had practically given up hope, and were beginning to wander from the caravan route in a drunken zigzag fashion. Mahmoud's little son trudged gamely beside me, his tongue protruding from between his swollen lips. Mohammed, no longer caring for his donkey, sat atop the weary animal covered with the poncho. Mahmoud's eyes spoke eloquently of our desperate situation; but his assistant, with more vitality than the rest of us together, bounded ahead, almost out of sight.

I saw him silhouetted against the setting sun; I saw him disappear over a ridge, and a half-hour later, as we were stumbling like blind men down a rock watercourse I heard the cry of *"Pani! Pani! Sahib, Pani!"*

Water! We stumbled and fell in our eagerness. We deserted the donkeys, we forgot one another; for there was life in that word. In the fever of repentance that comes in such crises I resolved never again to waste a drop of water, never again to be careless with the most precious gift to mankind; a gift that none but the thirsty can appreciate.

And it *was* water. A flock of goats surrounded it, many

goats were wading in it; but we pushed them aside and pressed our lips to the cool liquid that lay in the brush-guarded hollow. I drank slowly, carefully, sucking the thick stuff through my cracked lips. I did not know until the next morning that it was green, and had a sickening odor, for at that time it was the most delicious beverage that man or god could have created. We made camp at the water-hole, and until long past midnight were occupied in straining the water through cloths, and in filling our one water-skin, cup by cup.

I awoke the next morning to find myself in a magnificent amphitheater of blood-red mountains splotched with purple and yellow sandstone. The goats had disappeared but we knew that there was an oasis and encampment near by. The ravine, as we followed it, spread into a plain which rose upward as if to reach the peaks of the distant mountains. I saw that we were approaching a cliff, and an hour later, from a slight elevation, I was able to look beyond into a great barren valley; a valley so vast that the mountains encircling it seemed of no more importance than the sand-hills that a child would build at the edge of the sea. The haze that overhung this valley was mystifying; the mountains, as we came closer, turned into a pea green, and the endless expanse of gray desert below looked like an ocean floor, seen through a thousand fathoms of clear water. I approached the edge cautiously and looked down.

No vision could have filled me with more awe; no opium dream could have provided the tremendous beauty which I saw. The hills to my right rolled away in a pageant of red; to my left they flowed with a dull smoky green. They encircled a sea of glistening sand, hazy

with heat waves; and in its center, glowing like an emerald, was an oasis, surrounded by patches of the most wonderful shades of green and gold that I had ever seen. Yesterday, in the depths of despair, we had camped upon the brink of Paradise.

While Mahmoud and the natives began to encircle the cliff to the plain below, I descended, planning to meet them at the oasis. Half-way down I could distinguish the dome of a mosque and the ruins of a great mansion among the date-palms. Irrigation ditches radiated into the desert; and between them, the patches of green and gold turned into fields of oats and mustard. Two hours later I was strolling beside a silvery stream of sweet water that flowed beneath the shade of the date-palms.

Nine Persians swathed in yellow rags met me as I entered the walled enclosure. None of them spoke Hindustani, and, although I spoke not a word of Persian, I made them understand by signs that four more of my party—natives like themselves—would arrive within a short time. They were valiant-looking men with humorous twinkles in their eyes. Six feet four in their *malachees*, I thought, and any one of them could have torn a lion apart. A flock of women and children scampered out from behind a wall to have a hasty look at me and scurry back as rapidly. The old men frowned, the young ones laughed, spread their legs apart and stood with arms folded, grinning.

I bathed in the cement pool in front of the mosque, drank quantities of cold water, and gorged myself upon luscious yellow dates and fresh *chepatis*. Then I lay in the shade, gazing at the Paradise of greenery that enfolded me. When Mohammed arrived I told him that I wanted to buy a young goat for fresh meat, but when our

hosts brought me a little kid that cavorted around me like a puppy, I had not the heart to order it killed. Instead, a stupid sheep was slaughtered; and until far into the night we sat around the fire chewing joints of mutton amid the billows of savory steam that arose from the kettle.

I had thought it quite obvious that the water for the oasis came from the countless wells that dotted the oat and mustard fields; but as I approached the cliff to scale it and meet Mohammed on the other side, I came to a cement-lined pond, perfectly round, and filled with tiny fish and water-lilies. Built into the rocks, directly above me, were two old stone mills, and high above them a stream of water poured from a crevice in the mountain-side, to be run through the mills, and thence to the pool at my feet.

Irrigation systems are not generally enchanting; but this one was, for here in the salt desert, hundreds of miles from fresh water, every drop had been utilized. It turned the mill to grind wheat, it formed a pond to delight the eye; it flowed into wells, made a garden in the desert, and brought fish, water-lilies and rippling streams to a great hollow of clay and sand.

Going on up the cliff I saw that the solid rock had been chiseled into a viaduct in order that no water might be lost. Masonry had been used in places, masonry that had become petrified with the rock itself. But where the water came from was the puzzle. The only visible source was the hole, chiseled into the stone about half-way to the summit.

The entire mystery of this odd engineering feat became clear after I had reached the top, and began to descend into the valley below. In its hollow was a second oasis

of palms sheltering a caravansary; and in the far distance was a salt river. A narrow thread of water ran from the river to the caravansary, and from the caravansary to the base of the hill below me, where it disappeared. The entire mountain had been tunneled through! A mountain of solid rock had been chiseled through to bring water to the oasis from a salt river three miles away! By running down the zigzag viaduct on the other side of the cliff, and by dropping through the sunlight from the mills it was cleansed of its brackishness. When it reached the wells of the oasis it was almost perfect mountain water!

An old shepherd was tending goats in the shade of the caravansary, and when Mohammed and the rest arrived I learned through this old man that both oases had once been owned by a single family. The several forts commanding the entrances to the oasis were built to keep off the bandits, to prevent any person from intruding upon the privacy of the estate. But now, as the old shepherd said, "any man can stop to drink water and rest beneath the palms as long as he likes. . . .

"The tunnel through the mountain? No one knows when it was made. Some men say five hundred years; another man says a thousand years. I do not know. No man knows. The masonry is like the rock; it must be very old."

But the elaborate architecture of the caravansary had not been destroyed by time. The beautiful simplicity of its domes, and the gorgeous soft colorings of the tiles that covered the interior had not been effaced. A pool of clear water lay beneath the great central dome inside, and bits of straw and charred wood scattered in each of the four wings facing the pool showed that many weary

travelers like ourselves had found shelter from the scorching desert heat.

As we were approaching the Plain of Hormuz I was astonished to see a great moving column approaching us. Countless thousands of tiny legs danced up and down, and grotesque heads and long necks swayed above the dusty cloud. My eyes caught the glint of steel, and I was sure that a great horde of bandits mounted on camels was sweeping down upon us.

The heat waves threw them out of all proportion. The animals that I had thought to be camels became as large as elephants; the next instant they were the size of mice, almost invisible against the horizon. Within a half-hour they were upon us, and I saw that we were in the path of a great caravan of donkeys, loaded for Bunder-Abbas.

We moved far off the trail to let them pass—hordes of donkeys loaded with bales of rugs, sacks of dates; myriads of donkeys almost concealed beneath huge packing cases of merchandise. They swept past us like an entire city in retreat. Whole families were tucked into the gaudy saddle-bags on either side of the dusty animals; the black heads of children bobbed from each saddle-bag, and upon each twelfth donkey squatted a gray bearded patriarch smoking a water-pipe. It seemed as if half the merchandise of Persia were moving across the desert of its own accord, for we could see nothing but the flickering feet beneath, and an occasional gray head of a weary donkey. It loomed up once again against the horizon, magnified by the heat; but as quickly it vanished, and we were left in the desert with only the fresh droppings of the donkeys to prove that a caravan had passed.

Hormuz was nothing more than a pile of mounds and

brush huts, almost invisible in the twilight. Tiny fires, winked out by figures that passed before them, flickered in the distance, and a group of camels revealed their aristocratic breeding by moving aside to let us pass, but turning now and then as if to chide the young ones for their foolishness in scampering.

To my pleasant surprise, the caravansary was already occupied. A remuda of perhaps fifty horses, steaming in the cool night air, was feeding in the court; and each of the little rooms opening up on the square court glimmered with a fire. Many voices spoke and laughed. As we circled around, searching for a vacant alcove, I saw heavily armed men preparing to settle for the night.

Mahmoud seemed to be extremely nervous. Both he and Mohammed insisted that their donkeys should sleep in the same room with us. They refused to go out and search for fire-wood, and contented themselves with burning straw and charred ends that littered the stone floor. That night we slept between the donkeys and the tiny entrance on a bed of donkey dung that had been accumulating for perhaps a thousand years. It insulated us against the bitter chill of the stones; and a smoky fire, kept going by Mahmoud all night long, provided us with enough hot tea to warm our bodies.

Neither Mahmoud nor Mohammed went out to talk with the strangers. They stayed well inside our little alcove, talking in low voices, occasionally listening to the conversation and wild laughter that reechoed through the crumbling labyrinths of the caravansary. When I curled up beside the donkeys to sleep they threw more tea into the teapot. Several times during the night I awakened to see them still feeding the fire with tiny charred ends, and smoking the water-pipe.

The next morning the remuda of horses had vanished. Every room in the caravansary was empty, every man was gone. To my surprise, Mohammed had already made my breakfast, packed the donkeys and was ready to leave. I could not understand the sudden eagerness to be off. I suspected that the armed men who had vanished so silently during the night had something to do with it.

Mohammed explained. "He's *duschman,*" he cried. "He's going to kill man!"

"Duschmans? Those men who were here were *duschmans?"*

"Yes, Sahib, *duschmans.* They are going to attack that caravan we passed yesterday!"

I could scarcely believe him, for to enter a rendezvous of bandits and sleep among them unmolested seemed incredible. Yet, considering their horses and the absence of baggage, it was plausible enough, and the great speed of the caravan we had passed added weight to Mohammed's explanation. Surely, they were off to annihilate it; and it was no problem, after having seen a caravan of over three hundred richly laden donkeys, to wonder why we had been unmolested.

As if to put as much distance as possible between the bandits and ourselves, Mahmoud, in spite of a driving rain-storm, urged the donkeys onward mercilessly. By noon we had left the Plain of Hormuz; and an hour later we arrived at the summit of a rocky cliff to see the blue dome of the mosque at Lar glowing softly, twenty miles away.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

THE STRONGHOLD OF THE HARLEQUINS

Lar, the Ancient! City of the Great Caravans! City of dust and old splendors, moonlit white walls and crumbling ruins . . . city of towers and cliffs, surging caravansaries and blue-domed mosques . . . city of Lar, glowing in the moonlight like a vision, sung to an ancient dirge.

The donkeys stumbled sleepily through its narrow streets, and I, too fatigued to ride farther, followed them with the momentum that keeps one going long after strength itself has given out. We had gone all of thirty-five miles since morning, for in my eagerness to reach Lar, I had insisted that we keep on. Lar was here. Lar was around me! In spite of my utter weariness I could not help but feel the thrill of discovery, the elation of having received an overwhelming reward for the hardship that I had undergone.

We wandered between the soft white walls, searching for the caravansary. It was too late to see the men to whom I had letters, and we could find no one from whom to request direction or a lodging. Mahmoud ran ahead, hallooing and hammering upon the doors with his staff; but no one answered, no one unbolted the door. We came to courts utterly deserted and crossed over stone bridges that led us into vast gardens filled with weird trees. In our aimless wanderings we passed beneath great ruined arches, clambered over heaps of ruins and trudged through glistening white graveyards. We must have

reached the streets of the city again, for I was aroused from my semi-somnambulism by crying children, glaring lights and swarms of men and women moving to and fro. By some accident, we had stumbled into the caravansary.

But still there was no place to sleep. Whole families were clustered beneath the porticoes, and tiny fires, flickering in the open court, revealed bearded tribesmen encamped between the sleeping camels. Encircled by shaggy men, I was told, through Mohammed, that a large caravan had just arrived and filled every chamber to overflowing. One massive red-bearded fellow, however, in an attempt to see homage done to a European rallied some of his followers, and began to turn out a half-dozen families from a chamber that I might occupy it. The women screamed and clasped their children; they tore aside their veils in their anger; and at length a gaunt old woman rushed up to me with her breasts hanging from her torn clothing, grasped me by the arm, and dragged me into the room. With wild gestures and eloquent eyes she showed me their deplorable condition and begged me to pity them. I did, and was about to collapse asleep in the filth of the court, when a tall Persian, clad in silken garments, touched my arm and motioned me to come with him.

We followed him in wonderment to the portals of a large house in another part of the city. Three servants led us through a lighted court to a richly carpeted room heated by charcoal stoves. While we drank tea and ate the food offered us, I asked Mohammed to exhibit my letters to Gulam Reza and the governor. The tall Persian read them, bowed politely and left the room. Servants came and went with messages, and scarcely an hour later I was escorted to the residence of Gulam

Reza, friend of the British consul of Bunder-Abbas.

I was wide awake with the rapid surprises of the night. My entry into Lar could not possibly have been more fantastic. It seemed as if the entire city had suddenly awakened to do me homage. An hour ago I had been about to collapse in the filth of a caravansary; now, I was seated upon a silken cushion in the home of a wealthy Persian; and before me was a repast which rivaled any feast I had ever visioned during my long march across the desert. Here were the finest spiced rice and the creamiest curds; candies from Teheran and dates from Jahrum. All the rarities of an Oriental banquet were arranged about the huge platter of substantial foods at my feet. And at my right hand was arrack; at my left were tobacco and cigarette papers. Two servants, attentive to my slightest wish, stood on either side of the doorway.

I had no sooner awakened the next day than a servant entered with a charcoal stove and a tray of food. After I had eaten and washed with the warm water that he poured from a great copper pitcher he led me into the main dining-room. To my surprise it was filled with people, and as Gulem Reza came forward to greet me they bowed. As I shook hands with them in turn they bowed again, whispering phrases which I took to be compliments of greeting.

Suddenly, as if by some prearranged plan they started out into the street, motioning me to follow them. Gulem Reza and his son marched by my side, trying by gesture to make me understand more than the fact that we were going to a large house outside of the city.

Counting five servants and an armed guard, we were a party of twenty-three; but after we had reached the

center of the city my escort filled the street behind me to the farthest turn, and hordes of natives ran in front of the procession to announce my presence to the rest of the city.

Still taking no notice of the curious natives who followed us, my host started beneath the east arch of the bazar as if determined to get me somewhere as quickly as possible; but once we had reached the main court it was almost impossible for me to move. The guard beat back the crowds with his rifle-butt, and the servants slashed with their heavy whips at the tall black-eyed men with rifles across their backs who bent over me. From the piles of merchandise that filled the alcoves of the court, gold-turbaned merchants came to stare and speak a word with Gulam Reza; strange, uncouth people clad in thick felt coats embroidered with yellow wools watched me from afar as if they had never, in all their lives, seen a European.

We passed down the main aisle of the cathedral-like bazar, noisy with the din of the copper heaters, smelling of tobaccos and aromatic odors. At a second court we were halted by two caravans, just coming in from the desert; but at a word from the merchants a lane was cleared and we strolled beneath the west entrance toward a great mud castle on the outskirts of the city.

The building seemed entirely deserted. On the second floor, however, we entered a tiny room in which sat a single Persian, writing at a desk made of packing boxes. He wore a soiled alpaca coat, and his socks were drawn up outside his trousers legs.

"*Bonjour, monsieur,*" he smiled.

"Ah, *bonjour,*" I replied. Here, apparently, was the only man in Lar who spoke a European language. He

was Majib Zadeh, Minister of Finance, and the sole occupant of the mud castle.

With Majib Zadeh added to our company as the interpreter we returned to the city to call upon an eminent physician. Tea was served, after which the physician joined us in visiting a poet. This poet, in turn, locked up his house and fell in with the rest of my hosts to call upon a merchant. Toward evening I was headed for the house of the governor with an escort of perhaps thirty-five distinguished citizens of Lar, all trudging in the mud behind me, clad in silken shirts, yellow pantaloons and gold turbans. I had drunk at least sixty glasses of tea, rolled at least a hundred conical cigarettes, and moved my lips in a thousand words of greeting which I did not understand but repeated from memory.

A squadron of guards, stationed outside the governor's palace, escorted us to a second-story hall. We left our *malachees* on the threshold and stepped in. I wondered if the governor would be an anemic personage like the minister of Bunder-Abbas; if he would crouch over his tea glass and peer at me through sleepy eyes.

Suddenly, four guards marched into the room, presented arms and about faced. I heard a satisfied grunt, a shuffle of feet; and, after a discreet pause, a huge black bulk filled the doorway. I held my breath; I wondered if he really were human. He moved across the room like a circus float and stopped beside me. We shook hands, cast down our eyes and muttered compliments at each other. Bobbed red hair swished jauntily back from his forehead. Above a wilderness of mustaches were two beady eyes, moving like blackbirds in a haycock, and I noticed, as he sat down, that he wore black satin pantaloons fastened beneath his armpits with a draw-cord.

The servants entered with copper trays of *hors-d'œuvres,* and set them in a row between us. More guests arrived, still more bowls of curds and honey, candied meats and sirupy confections were brought in. Spaced between the heaps of food that covered the floor cloth were three kerosene cans of arrack.

The governor beamed upon us, stroked his mustaches and grinned. He held his tiny glass like a fat boy pinching a butterfly, and before any one could give the toast he opened his mouth like a goldfish and poured the arrack into his gullet. Holding the empty glass in the hollow of his hand, he smacked his lips with an immense satisfaction.

Foods in abundance were pushed upon me; arrack by the quart went down my throat. I had to eat, I had to drink, for the governor's every toast was to my health, and his persistent offerings of food held an obligation that was repaid only by eating them. In a desperate effort to offend no one I ate and drank until I was forced to lean back on my elbows, only to see the servants bring in more food. The governor, bending over until his stomach overlapped his feet, tore off a leg of boiled goat, wrapped it in a *chepati* full of spiced rice, and presented it to me. Immediately, I seized upon a huge hind-quarters, wrapped it in a dozen *chepatis,* and placed it in his hands. I thought surely that he would take the hint but he stripped off the meat like a starved man and stuffed it between his mustaches; he filled his cheeks so full of food that his eyes were almost invisible.

For seven hours the banquet raged, a massive, baronial affair that relived the feasts of Xerxes. There were cries of derision, there were laughter and pantomime. Men rolled on the floor, bellowing into the blue dome over-

head; a bald-headed merchant whinnied like a horse. The smoke of a dozen opium pipes floated between the spiraled pillars, almost concealing the loftiness of the hall; and through it the lean face of Majib Zadeh hovered like a mask, laughing airily, becoming serious, cracking jokes, interpreting my French, and nodding slyly at the satin pantaloons of the governor who sat grinning against the wall, stacked there like a ton of coal.

I had little rest the next day, for I had no sooner awakened than Majib Zadeh entered to inform me that a crowd of people was waiting to escort me to the fort. I glanced wistfully at my soft bed, slipped into my *malachees* and joined the party.

Preceded by the governor's body-guard of five blue-smocked soldiers we began to climb the cliff that overlooked the city from the east. At the end of a half-hour there were only fourteen in the party. When we had reached the top there were but nine hosts with me, yet Majib Zadeh assured me that, for a thousand years, the citizens of Lar had marched up the cliff like mountain goats whenever the city was attacked.

We reached the wooden gates to find them closed with an immense padlock. The guards hammered upon them, but two soldiers, peering through the cracks, would not let us in. A violent argument followed, with no result; and at length my hosts threw themselves angrily against the door as if to break it down. They were in a dreadful state of chagrin, and after a consultation one of them went to the edge of the cliff and called down into the city, asking the governor to send up the key. As the inhabitants came out into the street to look at us, all nine of us gave a lusty bellow for the key to the fort, and the excitement eventually came to such a pitch that, rather

than cause a tumult in the city, I told Majib Zadeh that I would come up another time when the key was available.

Immediately they tried to make up for my disappointment by becoming enthusiastic over the ruins of an old castle close by. Gulam Reza pointed out the king's swimming pool and fish pond and illustrated the king's method of angling on top of a cliff, several hundred miles from the sea. A heap of massive ruins, which extended down the north side of the cliff, Majib Zadeh pronounced to be the remains of a bridge that had once spanned the gorge to the opposite cliff, where a castle had stood. It had been built, he said, so that the king could ride from the fort to his castle without entering the city.

I was astonished at the avid interest taken in the fort by all of my hosts. They scattered around inspecting ruins and looking over the top of the cliff as if they had never been on top of it before. And as we descended, Majib confided to me in his choicest French, and with many a sly wink, that he was the only one of the party who had ever been inside the fort; nay, the only one who had ever even climbed the cliff.

The next morning, after a night-long carousal, I was asked if I cared to go on a hunting trip. Hunting! I said that nothing would delight me more. We went the rounds of the city and returned to the castle shortly before noon with twelve Persians, richly dressed and carrying shotguns across their backs. I was then so full of tea and candied meats that I could scarcely walk, but with horses to carry me to the distant mountains, where I thought we would hunt, I felt I could make it. But I could see no horses. Neither had the governor's bodyguard arrived to escort us.

We began to stroll beneath the lemon trees in the

garden, Majib Zadeh waxing keen over the prospects of the expedition and the rest of the party chatting easily, but holding their guns on the alert. I knew that if we did not start for the mountains fairly soon we would never reach them by sunset, and was about to question Majib Zadeh, when one of the merchants raised his gun and fired both barrels into the branches directly overhead. He handed his gun to a servant and, amid cheers of congratulation, bent down and picked up a tiny sparrow. With the game pocketed the hunt proceeded, around and around the garden beneath the lemon trees.

Suddenly I noticed little Jamshid swinging by his knees from a trapeze. His turban fell off, his skirts swept the ground beneath him, and when he tried to swing by one knee he tumbled to the earth in a heap. The Persians roared with laughter. They dropped their guns and began to swarm up the trapeze, into the pepper tree, and around the swing. Two of them began to soar through the air; Majib Zadeh chinned himself on the horizontal bar and little Jamshid brought a close to the merriment by leaping into the swing and bringing two fat merchants crashing to the ground. Then we repaired to the second floor of the castle to drink arrack and eat sweetmeats until the hour of the banquet arrived.

After seven days and nights of this rich life I decided to move on. Lar was magnificent, the governor was superb and my hosts were ideal; but I thought that if I saw another boiled goat or had to trudge through the mud to inspect another choice ruins I would start running for the desert. To the northwest was Jahrom, relic of the fire-worshipers, city of the ten thousand date-palms; beyond it lay Shiraz. I was so sure that I could join a caravan from Jahrom to Shiraz that I sent my servants

back to Bunder-Abbas and told Majib Zadeh that I wanted donkeys to take me as far as Jahrom.

"Donkeys!" he exclaimed. "Why don't you hire the motor-car?"

"What! A real automobile?"

He assured me that it was so and sent immediately for the merchant who owned it. At that time I did not wonder what kind of a motor-car it was, for the prospect of getting to Jahrom in one day instead of four was too good to question. An hour later, after much bargaining, it was arranged that Gulam Reza, his son, two servants and two chauffeurs should accompany me as far as Jahrom. Donkeys were forgotten, and the remainder of the night was spent in a great celebration of my departure by motor-car.

Three days later the car appeared in Lar. The radiator was off and the wheels were missing. At a tiny forge two grimy Persians were trying to hammer the axle into shape; yet at any moment, the merchant assured me, it would be ready.

The rains commenced, the governor's banquets increased in splendor. After five more days I was about to hire mules when there came a furious roaring and rattling from the alley near Gulam Reza's house. The roaring reached an agonized crescendo, and I ran out to see the tiny automobile, eager to go. We piled in the baggage, covered it with baggage. The servants crawled in, Gulam Reza and Jamshid followed; I sat on top of Jamshid. Fearing that at any moment the motor might die, we rushed to the bazar to load up with fuel.

As the motor rumbled and coughed the merchants shook their heads sadly. One richly dressed little fellow said to me: "Dear sir, it will not go to Jahrom. It can

not get there!" But I had faith. A swarm of natives pushed around the fountain for another start; the motor roared, donkeys brayed, camels rose to their feet and the merchants cheered as we sped through the arch. With the multitudes of Lar pouring after us we careened through the streets, chipped off cornices and bounded over the graveyard. A half-hour later we were skimming along the caravan route to Jahrom.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

THE CURSE

If I had ever suspected that motor travel to Jahrom would rob me of a more intimate contact with the country I was mistaken. I walked, pushed and pulled the motor-car practically all the way. Through sand-storms and icy streams, over rocky passes and spirals up a mountain, all seven of us worked that miserable contrivance until there was nothing left of it but four wheels and a cradle of tin.

The engine refused to propel us except across a dry level plain or down a mountainside. Laboriously, we pushed it up at least ten thousand hills grunting, heaving, an inch at a time. Once at the top we rested and made tea. Then we piled in, and with a shriek and yell away we went, careening against embankments, leaping over boulders and ditches with cloaks and ends of blankets flapping behind us. In the mud-flat, which was invariably below, we climbed out again, stretched our legs and began to push.

We worked for entire mornings constructing rock roads over washouts; we became mired in stream beds and waded in the freezing water up to our waists in order to save the car from being hopelessly lost. Once, in spite of all our efforts, it sank up to the engine. I can not say that I was sorry. I stood on the bank chafing my blue legs, and was beginning to think of deserting the expedition when a band of tribesmen rode up on camels. The car came out like a root, but still I could not rejoice.

Only the fact that I had lavished my brains and brawn upon the ungrateful heap kept me from pushing it back into the stream again.

On the third evening from Lar we stopped at an encampment of black tents. Gulam Reza had a long talk with the nomads, after which I was given to understand, through one of the chauffeurs who spoke Hindustani, that an enormous lake barred our way five miles farther on. The recent rains, I was told, had filled the valley through which the caravan route passed. It would be impossible to proceed; and Gulam Reza, with tears in his eyes and his little mouse face swathed in dirty gold cloth, pleaded that we remain in the camp until the lake had disappeared.

He was a pathetic wisp of humanity. He was entirely out of his element; during his whole lifetime he had never been out of Lar. His shoulders were thin and bent from squatting over precious merchandise, and his face was transformed with the hardships of the past three days. The chauffeurs, too, were reluctant to go on; but remembering the "impassable river" outside of Bunder-Abbas I insisted that we go on the next morning. Gulam Reza was heartbroken, but he proved himself the same lavish host of Lar by treating us to a bounteous dinner and filling my pockets with pistachio-nuts, sunflower seeds and Teheran candies, of which he carried bagsful beneath the folds of his *abbas*.

At noon of the next day we came to a divide in the mountains, coasted down a smooth hillside, and sped out upon a plain of dry mud so vast that its uttermost limits were lost in the haze of blue hills that encircled it. As far as I could see it was absolutely dry. The bright sun did not reveal the slightest glimmer of water. I glanced at

Gulam Reza, but not a flicker of embarrassment crossed his tense face.

Cut off entirely from the winds by the mountains, the plain was hot. The sun had created deep fissures in the mud, and we were forced to zigzag in crazy angles to keep from falling into them. Suddenly I discerned a faint glimmer in the distance; a few moments later I was astonished to see a large lake directly ahead of us.

Although there was no breeze the water sparkled as with waves. Around the edges of the lake were tall trees, swaying gently. Brush grew down the slopes of the hills into the water, and in a cove I could see boats being drawn up on the beach by men. I glanced at Gulam Reza and the chauffeurs, but their minds seemed to be too deeply absorbed in the tragedy of the situation to bother with jocular persiflage. They stared directly ahead, as if unable to realize the truth of their predictions.

Suddenly a herd of antelope appeared in front of us, their white tails flashing behind them like a flock of birds. They ran toward the lake, they reached its edge. They disappeared into the lake! Almost immediately the trees vanished, and a barren plain of baked mud, dancing with heat waves, replaced the mirage. The flock of white tails appeared to our right; the antelope circled behind us and giggled at me.

In a windy valley, fifteen miles from Jahrom, we ran out of oil. The motor settled down for a long rest, and we sat in the car, staring at one another. Finally, to vary the monotony of wondering what to do, we climbed out and began to run around in circles to keep warm. Gulam Reza ran in very small circles, like a frightened rabbit. His great brown eyes were pools of despair, and his voluminous robes clung to his wan little body like tissue.

Jamshid, perched upon a rock, grinned from ear to ear and munched sunflower seeds.

Now, I thought, was the moment for desertion. Now, since she had given up the ghost completely, my conscience was clear. With a bundle of dates and some *chepatis* the chauffeurs and I started walking to Jahrom. I was happy as a lark, for I began to sense that premonition of an adventure that comes after hardship long endured. We walked buoyantly for half a mile, and were just beginning to lose sight of the motor-car when one of the chauffeurs, with a shout of triumph, pointed to a Persian camp high in the shelter of an overhanging cliff. He bounded toward it like a greyhound and returned two hours later with the news that he had hired a man to run into Jahrom and fetch back a can of oil.

Desertion? I could no more desert that car than fly. Here in the desert, hundreds of miles from its nearest counterpart, this absurd relic of America had clung to me like a disease, claimed me as a brother. And the nomads, coming down from the cliff to inspect the curious object, looked me over as if I belonged to it. They were a squat hairy people, clad in thick felt jackets. They looked more like satyrs than human beings, yet within their black tents, high on the mountainside, their women wove the most beautiful rugs that I had ever seen. Three and four of them together, with their children at their breasts, bent over the looms weaving the soft colors of the desert into a magic pattern with a deftness that my eyes could scarcely follow. The men, like creatures of another mind, laughed at my absorption in their work. Rug-making was for women! They were men of action, and thought nothing of running three miles down the cliff and back again to fetch me a skin of water. A child, small enough

to hide in a water-jug, carried up the bedding of our entire party.

They fed us on fried locusts and goat's milk, sang a little and danced like goats. I fell asleep to the sound of millstones grinding flour, hoping that a flood would sweep down the valley and carry the car with it.

The next morning, as we were gathered about the car with the entire tribe, the runner arrived with the oil. After he had delivered it, the chauffeur began arguing with him; and the next thing I knew the fellow had taken the can and began to run back to Jahrom.

"Hey!" I cried. *"Arretez! Brenti! Raho!* Stop! What's the trouble? Why is he going back?" I asked the chauffeur.

"Trouble?" he replied indignantly. "Why he paid five *shies* too much for the oil!"

If there had been any one to catch me I would have swooned. Five *shies!* Twenty cents! I gave the chauffeur a *kron,* and a half-hour later we were on our way once more.

Three, seven, eight . . . the miles fell behind us, the motor worked as if inspired. We ricochetted down a ravine, bounded across a high plateau and began to slither sidewise down a gorge. The chauffeur jammed on his brakes, spun us around and brought the car to a halt at the very edge of a deep stream.

We were at an impasse. In a year's time we could not have bridged it with stones. Below us, as far as I could see, it grew wider; above, it was narrow, but deeper. Gulam Reza sank into a bush without a word, silent tears streaming down both cheeks. It was impassable, he said at length. He would leave the motor for ever and walk to Jahrom.

But as long as the motor still lived I knew that there was hope. While the rest of the party started for the city the chauffeurs and myself went up the stream to find a crossing. It was less than a mile away. We ran the car to the top of a hill, went at full speed down the incline and bounded across the stream only to be stuck half-way up the opposite bank. The wheels spun madly and the gravel flew, but still she stuck. It was futile. The chauffeurs built a fire and began to drink arrack, and I was about to remove my shoulder from the car and let it slip back into three feet of water when I spied four bedraggled figures coming down the hill toward us. It was Gulam Reza and three survivors of the dash to Jahrom. He said that they were thirsty and had come back to get a drink.

It was little trouble for the seven of us to put the motor on solid level earth. Again we piled in, reached the caravan route once more, and at noon sighted the date-palms of Jahrom.

As the first white building came into sight I resolved that if we ever managed to reach the city on four wheels I would never put my shoulder to its tonneau again. I would no more think of hiring it on to Shiraz than I would consider carrying it on my back. If I could not find a caravan I would hire donkeys; if I could not hire donkeys I would stay in Jahrom for ever. And convinced that my kinship with the motor-car was once and for ever dissolved we bounced into the city, and I leaped from her tonneau determined to travel the remaining hundred and seventy-five miles to Shiraz on the back of an animal.

But, oh, for the subtlety of a Persian! Oh, to plumb the unfathomable mystery of his mind! I had not been

in Jahrom three days before I discovered that it was absolutely impossible for me to get out of the city by any other means than the motor-car; for Gulam Reza, in spite of all he had been through, wanted to go on to Shiraz by automobile. He knew that, if I hired the car once more, I could not refuse to take him and his party free. In Lar he had paid out twice the price of motor-car hire with each banquet; on the way to Jahrom he had bought me bounteous repasts at every nomad camp. That was his sacred duty as a host. But this was a business deal, and business, to a Persian, is quite as sacred.

I was between the devil and the deep sea. The chauffeurs announced that if I did not hire the motor immediately they would return to Lar. Ali Akbar assured me solemnly that no caravans ever went to Shiraz; and so great was his influence in the city that no man dared to hire me a donkey for any price. I was forced to take the motor-car again, for I could not live with Ali Akbar for ever.

He was a curious host. He was a merchant and a friend of Gulam Reza, yet he posed as a paragon of virtue; and no Persian merchant can be a paragon of virtue. He neither smoked nor drank. He never raised his voice above a whisper. His dinners were sedate hours for meditation and the consumption of simple foods. There was no arrack to loosen our tongues; we sat around the floor cloth of his mirrored dining hall like disciples partaking of communion.

He bemoaned the fact that Persians drank, bemoaned the fact that the golden dates of Jahrom were made into arrack; and he was so great a power in the city that only the socially negligible could enjoy arrack with any sense of freedom. These happy outcasts would go up to the

old Parsee temple on the hill behind the mosque and, like the bad boys down by the railroad track, have a wonderful time. Their hilarious laughter and songs, resounding over the entire city, pained Ali Akbar deeply. As we strolled beneath the shadows of his moonlit garden he would say to me: "America is a great country. Prohibition is a great thing. Some day, Persia may rise to such heights." And when he had translated this remark to Gulam Reza and the rest, all would nod their heads solemnly, thinking of the grand times at Lar.

Thus, in spite of his virtues, it gave him an immense satisfaction to help Gulam Reza score a business coup. I hired the motor-car, and with more misgivings than I had felt in eleven adventurous months, started for Shiraz; not with seven lusty Persians and their baggage, but with *eight,* for a friend of Ali Akbar had decided to go with me. He was a huge awkward brute with a perpetual grin on his face. And he kept on grinning even after I had forced him to lie across the baggage with his face and feet in the piercing wind, and sat on him.

We sank into streams and we turned over in snowbanks. The tires burst and we had to wrap them with strips of blanket. In a howling blizzard two days out of Jahrom we ran out of oil, pushed the car to a ruined caravansary and camped for a day and a night beside tiny brush fires until a caravan happened along with enough lard to be melted up and poured into the engine. A dozen times we lost our way and ran out of gasoline. We bought up all the kerosene and arrack from the nearest village and poured it into the tank. My long trip from Bunder-Abbas was a picnic by comparison; my escape from the Undanoems and the *shimal* of the Gulf of Oman seemed like gentle games I had been playing in preparation. If I

had ever felt any desire to become an Arctic explorer I lost it then and there. Yet, through some miracle, the hundred and seventy-five miles fell behind us, and in five days, by the grace of God, we crept through the streets of Shiraz and stopped beneath the entrance of the Grand Bazar.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

THE MIRAGE

Persepolis! City of the Archæmenean kings! Looted by Alexander and his drunken freebooters! Burned in a drunken brawl at the whim of the beautiful Thaïs! Persepolis was only sixty miles from Shiraz! I had trekked blindly across southern Persia without realizing that the famous ruins lay in my path; and to find myself almost at their very gates was as startling as discovery itself.

Major Melvin Hall, controller at Shiraz of the American finance commission in Persia, found me a motor-car, and by noon I was beginning to descend upon a vast plain. The chauffeur, in answer to my repeated requests for the direction of the city, kept pointing ahead; but I could see nothing but hard clay that blended with the distant mountains. It seemed incredible that the famous Persepolis could be so lost in the midst of uninhabited mountains; it was exciting to realize that only those who traveled far off the beaten track could ever hope to see it.

At length I made out two blackened spires in silhouette against the ocher-colored mountains. More spires became visible . . . then the great arch of the winged bulls . . . the Hall of a Hundred Columns. Persepolis appeared out of the desert like a mirage, and in twenty minutes we stopped beneath a gigantic staircase that led up to the massive terrace of rock which held the city above the plain.

The immensity of the ruins came before me so suddenly

that for some time I was unable to readjust my mind to the proper focus. For twelve months I had been seeing the majesties of nature; here was a creation of human beings that was as wonderful as any empire in the jungle, as utterly enchanting as the volcanic peaks of Flores by moonlight. It was the conception of a visionary king, brought to earth by the blackened columns, the disfigured frescoes, the ruin of drunken Macedonian hands.

I walked up to a tomb on the hill behind the city, and looked down. It was even more impressive than before. Beneath me was the great banquet hall in which the revelries of Darius and Alexander had taken place; there was the pavilion of Xerxes, surrounded by acres of stone pillars, arches and excavations. The city, built upon this vast foundation, commanded a view of the plain for miles in every direction. The inhabitants must have seen the hosts of Alexander marching upon them for hours, sweeping toward their magnificent city like a tidal wave.

I walked out into the plain and looked at the city from the east. A corner of the foundation rose up before me like the prow of a sunken battle-ship. Any one of the blocks of stone of which it was made could have been a fitting monument to the great conqueror; there could have been no grander entrance for an invading host of blaring trumpets and flashing steel than the two wide staircases that led from the plain to the arch of the winged bulls above.

So absorbed was I in speculating about the ruins and in examining the beautiful frescoes and inscriptions that adorned the walls that I did not notice the passage of time until the chauffeur called to me, saying that I should go across the valley before the sun set. From a small hillock he pointed out what looked to be three gigantic Maltese crosses chiseled out of a cliff to the west. We

started toward them, and I discovered, a half-hour later, that they were the tombs of kings. A fourth, and perhaps the largest of all, had been hewn out of a wall of rock that flanked the main cliff.

There, at last, I saw the boastful exploits of Darius chiseled in three cuneiform languages for the world to decipher. Before me, embedded within a mountain of stone, was the sarcophagus of the conqueror; and although I scanned every inch of the cliff trying to find a way up, it was futile. Only a rope dropped from the mountaintop could have enabled me to reach his tomb.

When I returned to Persepolis again the sun was setting. The great plain of ocher clay had been turned to gold, and the surrounding mountains were shrouded in the same purple and red draperies that I had seen so often in the southern mountains. And Persepolis had changed. It absorbed all the colors of the desert; its gigantic pillars were enriched with livid high lights, and the spaces between were darkened as if the tapestries of the Archæmeneans had covered them again. For a few brief moments before the sun disappeared behind the mountains, Persepolis was transformed into the same magic city from which the glory of Persia had been carried to the outside world.

Surely some divine destiny had led me to the heart of this ancient kingdom. I had gone into the mountains from Bunder-Abbas because they were too beautiful to miss; I had gone to Lar because I liked the name; on to Shiraz because it held the Grand Bazar built by the shahs, to find myself in a part of Persia that I would have gone ten thousand miles to see had I known how interesting it was.

I hurried back to Shiraz like a child at Christmas-time, hoping that there were other wonders in this rare part of the East that I had stumbled into without knowing it.

Chapter Thirty

THE THEATER OF GHOULS

What in the earth is more wonderful than a cave? What is more enchanting than a cave in the top of a mountain, a cave filled with graves and the memories of a great barbarian? As I sat before the fireplace with Major and Mrs. Hall, planning my return to the warm climates, the major handed me a little map which he had hastily sketched with crayon.

"The first village you will strike," he said, "is Kazerun; and about seven miles northwest of Kazerun is the Cave of Shapur. If you want to see it I will wire the Persian minister there to have horses ready for you."

"Shapur?" I asked.

"Yes, the chap who conquered the Romans! There are some bas-reliefs carved into the mountainside showing the Romans being led before him in chains. But in the top of a mountain a little way up that same valley is his cave. It's a hard climb and a steep one, but it's well worth it!"

Worth it! If the climb to such a cave were hard and steep I knew that it would be worth it. I arrived in Kazerun by motor the next evening hoping for the worst; and my eagerness to reach the cave was increased a hundredfold when the Persian minister, who spoke French, told me that within the past year only two Europeans had made the ascent. He offered me a lantern with which to explore the interior of the cave if I succeeded in reaching it.

I met my armed guard at the entrance to the valley the

next morning. The little hill beneath which the horses stood seemed to be a solid mass of ruins and rock, so completely petrified as to present the illusion of a great city in ruins. Two little forts commanding the entrance to the valley, and the bas-reliefs chiseled out of the mountainside, suggested that such a city might have actually existed.

Beyond the stream that flowed down the valley was a series of bas-reliefs cut across the middle by an aqueduct that had been hewn out of the solid rock centuries after the kingdom of Shapur had been obliterated. Even my guard was struck by this uncalled-for vandalism, for he shook his head sadly and tried to indicate with his hands how the relief depicting Shapur receiving the wreath of kingship from God might have looked in its original state.

I leaped into the saddle once more and loped up the valley behind the glistening rifle of my guard. Three miles up we came to a village of mud huts at the base of a steep mountain. It had begun to rain, and the valley was so full of mist that I could scarcely see the cliffs around me. The slope behind the village was covered with huge rocks and boulders that blended into a steep incline in the distance. With two of the villagers running ahead of us with skins of water and food we began to ascend the slope on horseback; but after a short half-mile it became so steep that I was forced to dismount. The guard stayed with the horses and I followed the natives afoot.

When I started, I wore heavy woolen underwear, two shirts, a coat and a heavy jacket. Within fifteen minutes I cached the jacket under a prominent boulder. Next went the coat and the two shirts. Before we had scarcely begun

the real ascent of the mountainside I was climbing naked from the waist up, and had to hold on to rocks or roots to keep from sliding backward. The natives no longer leaped ahead of me like mountain goats. They were at my side, behind me, or a little in front; and if they had tried to jump ahead they might have fallen a considerable distance before a boulder stopped them. There were inclines of about fifty degrees covered with long silky grass. We had to zigzag, digging our toes and hands into the earth to make progress. But in spite of these difficulties and a few insignificant cliffs to scale, the only thing that could keep any one from reaching the top would be an excess of avoirdupois.

The atmosphere was so thick with mist and drizzly rain that I had been unable to see the top of the mountain, or even to gather any hint of where the cave was. But now, as the valley below became indistinguishable, I discerned above me a faint dividing line between the mountain and the gray sky. Soon the cliff loomed above us; and as we crept beneath a gigantic, overhanging shell of rock, the mouth of the Cave of Shapur opened up.

If caves could speak, what epics this one could have told! It overlooked the valley through which the armies of an empire had passed, overlooked the ridges and peaks of mountain ranges; it overlooked great plains where ten thousand years of Persian dynasties had risen and fallen. Its mouth, sixty feet from top to bottom, held the remnants of the colossal statue of Shapur as if they were the bones of the monarch himself. Its head was a mountain-top, and its throat, lined with sepulchers, led toward a pit of blackness. With the visions of dead conquerors and the vista of a hundred centuries of Persian history in its mouth, what tales it could have told!

The heroic statue of Shapur no longer looked down upon the valley. During the Mohammedan invasion in the seventh century Arabs had swarmed up the mountainside to break open the sarcophagi and overturn the statue. Now, it was almost unrecognizable. The face was mutilated, and the arms were broken off. Only the massive bulk of body and a projecting bit of rock in the roof of the cave were left to indicate its original size.

I lighted the lamp and started toward the blackness beyond. The walls on either side had been squared up for the construction of vaults or tombs. I passed two looted sarcophagi, chiseled out of the solid bed-rock, and came to a steep declivity, beyond which was a space so vast and so dark that I stepped back until my eyes could gain the proper focus. I could hear the dripping of water and the sigh of trapped winds. The piercing coldness absorbed me as if I were a wisp of steam.

Gradually, as I became accustomed to the strange lighting, I made out grayish stalactites hanging down from the darkness above me; the high lights of others appeared to the right and left. The depths beneath me were filled with stalagmites, jagged rocks and curiously twisted formations of curve and hollow. All about me, in that gigantic amphitheater in the mountaintop, were grotesque shapes of dripping stone. Suddenly, across the chasm, my eye caught the grayish-white openings of three tunnels which seemed to radiate into the bowels of the earth.

With the lamp turned high I started toward them, picking my way carefully down the slippery crags into the very depths of the chasm. I was up to my knees in water, and streams of water kept dripping upon me wherever I moved. Even with my light I was unable to see far

ahead; and, fearing that I might step into a glistening pool that was bottomless, I clung to the juts of rock at every step. From the blackness far above me the points of the stalactites glistened like countless stars. The light from the mouth of the cave which I could no longer see, brought myriads of strange limestone formations into unearthly relief.

I reached the mouth of the middle cave to find an opened tomb. A massive lid, broken in half, lay close by. The blackness beyond intrigued me. What if I should find a sarcophagus that had not been found by the Arabs? The tunnel might penetrate the mountain miles farther; surely, Shapur would not have trusted his wealth to the sarcophagi in the entrance when these labyrinths of caves offered such perfect places of concealment. I kept on, and a hundred yards farther came to a room beyond which I could see no further continuation of the cave. It was as if a black curtain had been dropped across the tunnel. I threw a stone into the darkness; some moments later I heard the distant sound of its fall. My lantern, held against a wall of limestone, gave enough light to disclose a veritable abyss below me. I dropped another stone, and was able to count off twelve seconds before it struck. There seemed to be no steps leading down, but I explored the recesses of the room in the hope that I might find a passageway. The thought that this abyss might hold a treasure that the Arabs had overlooked was too pregnant of action to resist attempting the most reckless means of descent.

Hours later, it seemed, I thought I heard voices calling me from the blackness above. I had managed to get down only to find myself on a ledge that sloped away into a myriad of tunnels. The voices called again. The

winds, I fancied. It could be nothing but winds from some opening in the moutain that I could not see. To reassure myself I yelled a reply; but no sooner had the echoes died than the voices sounded again, louder this time and more beseechingly. They seemed to come from the myriad of tunnels, now from the blackness above. I was convinced that, whether they were trick winds or echoes of my imagination, they were creating the most perfect illusion of human voices that I had ever heard. Eventually they stopped entirely. It seemed hopeless to continue any deeper, and as I was practically frozen with the cold I climbed out and returned to the great central cave.

To my bewilderment I could not see the entrance in which lay the statue of Shapur. The entire ghoulish amphitheater was as dark as pitch. The main entrance seemed to have disappeared completely. I was already bitterly chilled with the cold and dampness, but now it seemed colder than a glacier. I picked my way down through the chasm once more and mounted the opposite side where my sense of direction told me the entrance had been. Here were the opened sarcophagi, there were the chiseled walls. I kept on, and reached the lip of the great cave to see the stars shining above me. The two natives had gone. It had been their voices that called to me through the bottom of the abyss. I could scarcely realize that I had been inside the cave for five hours.

Chapter Thirty-One

SUNSET

If Bagdad had not lured me toward the Persian Gulf, I might still be in Lar to this day; for when the little motor-car full of natives with whom I was traveling to Bushire had reached the top of the snow-covered mountains I looked south into a pageant of color that told me that the spring had come to Persia. The valley, four thousand feet beneath me, was a livid green; the hillsides were a soft green, and the upper slopes blended to the pink peaks in a thousand different shades of soft dusty green.

And when we had reached the meadows of these valleys I saw that the almond and peach trees were in blossom. The streams sparkled in the sunlight, and tiny villages were nestled among foliage that filled the air with a rich fragrance. Here and there were flocks of sheep and goats tended by ragged little boys with red cheeks; and when, at a pass in the mountains, we came upon the remains of a caravan that had been massacred by bandits only two days before, the contrasting loveliness of nature was almost too ethereal for human eyes.

But the Grand Bazar of Shiraz, clutching the city in its great aisles like an octopus, had resurrected my faith in cities, and I wanted to see Bagdad of the Thousand and One Nights. I took the boat from Bushire to Busra, hurried across the desert by rail and entered the City of the Caliphs.

Spring had also come to Bagdad; but with a vengeance.

It was hot, dusty, horrible. Our civilization has swept the city clean of charm. Telegraph poles stand side by side with the minarets; wide streets, trisecting the city, have replaced many of the winding lanes through which Haroun-al-Raschid so often wandered with his select company. Only the beautiful domes of the mosques and the interiors of the bazars retain the ancient flavor that I had so hoped to find.

Not far from Bagdad were Babylon and the Golden Domes of Kadhimein. To the west were the ruins of Palmyra and Baalbek, the cities of Damascus and Jerusalem. I could not bring myself to visit them. All that I had so far, I had won. Borneo I had won, Oman I had won, Flores, Persia and the Cave of Shapur I had won. They were mine for ever; and no matter how many people saw them hereafter, they would always be mine; for I had suffered with them, I had given myself to them. Each hardship, each pain, had bound them up with the vitality of life. But the shrines that lay beyond—those sights that I could see without effort on my part—were of another class. They were for some one else to see; some one, perhaps, with more imagination, some one who would rather dream than do.

Thus, although the Druses were waylaying the mails to Damascus, I looked upon my seven-hundred-mile trip across the Irak and Syrian Deserts to the Mediterranean as the beginning of a prosaic homeward journey; and until the transport left I wandered through the streets of Bagdad, hoping that I, like Sinbad, might find some one to whom I could tell my adventures.

THE END